

Beavis and Butt-head Do the Disney Shareholders

Whatever you think of Mike Ovitz, nobody in the real world, not even in the far-out precincts of Hollywood, gets that kind of money for flubbing up after a year on the job.

Mr. Ovitz's \$76 million termination package (to go by the lowest estimate) was his guarantee that Disney wasn't playing Goofy on him. Disney induced him to give up a splendid career and a company he founded so Disney could have a backstop for Michael Eisner's "bum ticker" (in the delicate words of Ted Turner). It was a bad case of a company throwing money at a personnel problem, largely because the

from Mr. Ovitz. An accomplished magician of spin, he was famous for treating the future as something that respoled to his will. His manner, in pitching prospective clients, was to lay out in confident, omniscient detail how their careers would unfold under his fabulous tutelage.

In the unfolding of his own ambitions, though, he faltered. He showed doubt.

He had helped to midwife Sony's purchase of Columbia Pictures, but when Sony approached him to run the property, he equivocated and finally declined on grounds that the monetary rewards were incommensurate with his dignity. He had



orchestrated the sale of MCA to Matsushita, and was still hovering intently when Matsushita resold the property to Seagram. But when Edgar Bronfman Jr. offered him the studio and a pay package reportedly worth \$250 million, Mr. Ovitz again dithered and finally backed away.

This ambulating mid-life crisis—not the confident and infallible genius of his own flackery—was the Mike Ovitz who fell into Michael Eisner's lap.

And Mr. Eisner was facing a crisis of his own. The leadership team that had lifted Disney from genteel desuetude to its new prominence as a go-go entertainment company had suddenly flown apart.

Frank Wells, president and behind-the-scenes corporate acut, was killed in a helicopter crash early in 1994. Jeffrey Katzenberg, who had run Disney Studios for a decade, departed in a huff a short time later, amid much little-attle about Mr. Eisner as "the withholding father."

Then went television chief Richard Frank, and CEO Steven Hollenbach.

Mr. Eisner was alone at the helm. Worse, he had just suffered a coronary mishap of undisclosed severity, bad enough to necessitate an emergency quadruple bypass. Disney shareholders were crying for a succession plan.

So Mr. Eisner plucked his friend, Mr. Ovitz of the all-powerful, self-created reputation, to be his insurance policy. What Disney shareholders are now paying \$76 million to learn is that Michael Eisner was not yet willing to deal seriously with Disney's future after Michael Eisner.

When a star ballplayer is recruited to the front office, he's first assigned to manage a double-A club so he can miff it up out of sight. Mr. Ovitz, who had never run anything bigger than his team of agents, was allowed to flop around Disney's organizational table and its many lines of business. Predictably, his "trouble-shooting" only required more. There was the clumsy recruitment of programming whiz Jamie Tarses from NBC. And he lured Martin Scorsese with a promise to distribute his Dalai Lama film, overlooking how this might play with the Chinese police he was romancing on Disney's behalf.

This is how a great company goes about grooming an untried executive on whom it has just spent a fortune? Messrs. Eisner and Ovitz and their families had played together for 25 years. Mr. Ovitz was well known (and not well loved) by the Hollywood press. The challenges entailed in molding this piece of corporate clay had been widely retold. But it doesn't appear that Mr. Eisner gave much thought to anything beyond pushing Mr. Ovitz before the cameras as the magic helper who would make his own mortality go away.

In every marriage and in every relationship, there is the element of unconscious exploitation. But at least in Hollywood there are gobs of cash with which to salve the wounds.

Yet \$76 million is an unseemly amount of salve. A company like Disney, which lives by marketing shared experiences, might have wondered how this shared experience would go down with its customers. Mickey's dream factory turns out to be just another sausage factory, and one whose output is a bit less appetizing since the inner works were exposed. And now comes word that Disney has plumbed new lows in distorting reviewers' quotes for its movie ads.

Yes, a contract is a contract. But Messrs. Ovitz and Eisner are said to be "friends," are said to have one of those "relationships" that are the coin of show business. They hashed out this settlement themselves, and nothing was stopping them from settling on a presentable sum between the mountain of money Mr. Ovitz would get for being fired and the lump of coal he'd get for walking away. Hollywood knows how: Disney could have struck a deal to invest in his future projects. There could at least have been the hint of him doing something to earn his payoff.

But who is the moral authority who can pick up the phone and tell our business leaders when they're setting a bad example for the country—Bill Clinton? Once in a while, though, we could stand being reminded that the freedom of the market is also the freedom to leave something on the table for the sake of honor.



Michael Ovitz

Business World

By Holman W. Jenkins Jr.

principals had been allowed to pitch their tents in the la-la land of wishful thinking.

Let us reconstruct how Mr. Ovitz, a talent agent of ferocious reputation, ended up in management at Disney, in a job at which he was doomed to fail. Despite being lionized as Hollywood's most powerful man, he had been visibly mooning around town for years in search of a higher purpose. Having built up Creative Artists as the premier talent agency, and having made a bundle, he was reported to be feeling "restless," unfulfilled.

Word of his angst made it into profiles in the New Yorker and the Los Angeles Times. He saw himself as more than an agent. He saw himself as an artist, a builder, a great studio chief, an eminence, a friend and adviser of politicians—and even as president of the United States, in the peroration of the New Yorker article.

Nor were these visions secreted into print by immaculate means. They came

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P
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Four Are Killed in Florida Helicopter Crash

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Jan. 23 (AP) — A helicopter that was being used to spray herbicides in the Everglades clipped the top of a 300-foot radio tower today and crashed, killing all four people aboard.

The helicopter, operated by Air Center Helicopters of St. Thomas, V.I., was under contract to the South Florida Water Management District.

"The rotor clipped the tower about 20 feet from the top," said Parker Priest, who saw the accident from his airboat. "At that time, I saw the helicopter headed straight for the

ground, and pieces of the rotor were coming off and flying straight below the tower."

The top of the tower fell over, guy wires snapped and the three passengers were thrown out. The pilot's body was still inside the helicopter after the crash.

The passengers, who were wearing waders, were to have been dropped off to spray herbicides on melaleucas, an Australian tree that has displaced native Everglades vegetation.

HNC p 152

73 Are Killed As 2 Copters Collide in Air Over Israel

By SERGE SCHMEMANN

JERUSALEM, Feb. 4 — Two Israeli helicopters ferrying soldiers to south Lebanon collided in midair this evening over the northern Galiilee, killing all 73 men on board in the worst military air disaster in Israeli history.

Military officials said there was no immediate explanation of what had caused the crash of the two Sikorsky CH-53 transport helicopters, known as Yasurs in the Israeli military. The weather in northern Israel was cloudy but not stormy, and the nighttime flight was routine.

The accident stunned the nation. The toll far exceeded the 27 deaths recorded in Israel's buffer zone in south Lebanon in all of 1996, or the 54 fatalities in the last such accident, the crash of a helicopter on a training flight on May 10, 1977.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared the disaster "too heavy to bear," and he canceled a to Jordan scheduled for Wednesday and a meeting with Yasir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, on Thursday. King Hussein and Mr. Arafat called Mr. Netanyahu to express condolences.

Both Israeli television channels interrupted their broadcasts and focused on the disaster, showing bodies being carried from the burning tangle of rotors, metal and rifles.

The crash occurred shortly after 7 P.M. over the small farming community of Shaar Yishuv, several miles

east of Qiryat Shemona. Many residents thought the explosions were a Katyusha rocket attack from Lebanon and initially rushed for bomb shelters.

One of the helicopters crashed into the town's guest house, setting it ablaze. But the house was vacant, and no civilians were killed. The second helicopter went down 500 yards further into a stream, burrowing deep into the mud.

Rina Castelnuovo, a freelance photographer, who frequently works for The New York Times was driving with her family near Shaar Yishuv at the time of the crash and witnessed a large fireball.

"When I approached, the house was on fire and the helicopter was engulfed in smoke," she said. "Bodies were being lined up alongside the house, about 30. There was great confusion. Ambulances were arriving. Armored personnel carriers were trying to close off the area. Some local people were walking around confused."

Six and a half hours later, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and senior military commanders held a press conference in Tel Aviv and announced that only 25 bodies had been identified so far. They said that the dead were 65 soldiers and 8 crewmen, and that 13 of them were officers.

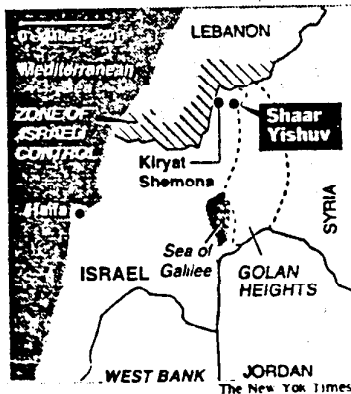
Mr. Mordechai, whose last command in the army before his retirement was in southern Lebanon, was clearly shaken. "Right now we returned from the north, and we saw the images and the great fire, and the heart is indeed burned from these sights," he said.

The Minister said he had appointed a commission of inquiry that would begin its work at 7 A.M. on Wednesday. Officials said the helicopters had not carried flight recorders.

Lieut. Gen. Amnon Shahak, the Army Chief of Staff, and Maj. Gen. Eitan Ben-Eliahu, who flanked Mr. Mordechai at the press conference, said they did not yet know what had caused the collision. General Ben-Eliahu said there was no indication of mechanical failure and the flights were on schedule.

Military commentators interviewed on Israeli television noted that military helicopters routinely turn off all their lights when approaching the Lebanese border to avoid being spotted by Hezbollah guerrillas on the other side.

The Israeli Army has maintained a nine-mile-wide buffer zone in southern Lebanon since 1985, and Hezbollah, an Shiite Muslim militia also known as the Party of God, has waged a constant guerrilla battle against the Israelis.



Shaar Yishuv was the site of a midair helicopter collision.

HNC p153

CHOPPER DOWN

Top exec
dead as
corporate
'copter
sinks in
East River



Crash victim Craig Tate



Rescue workers pull victim from East River after yesterday's helicopter tragedy.

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RINGSIDE
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to
FOREMAN
VS.
SAVARESE!**

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EAST RIVER TRAGEDY

HELICOPTER GOES

1 dies, 3 are injured aboard corporate craft



A corporate helicopter spun wildly out of control at a Midtown heliport last night, slamming into an embankment and plunging into the East River — killing one man and injuring the three others on board.

A top executive of Colgate-Palmolive — chief technological officer Craig Tate, 51, of New Canaan, Conn. — died of a heart attack.

Pilot Edward Thurn and James Serafino were critically hurt. Pilot Rick Bird was less seriously injured.

The Eurocopter BK 117, owned by Colgate, had just dropped off two passengers at the 60th Street heliport and picked up two more for a trip to White Plains when disaster struck at about 8:30 p.m.

Eyewitnesses said blue sparks started flying from the aircraft as the tail rotor apparently malfunctioned on takeoff.

The blue-and-white seven-seater, which had flown in from Piscataway, N.J., made a sputtering noise and spun wildly in midair as joggers, strollers and nearby residents watched in horror.

As the pilot and co-pilot desperately tried to land the out-of-control chopper, it crashed just north of the Queensboro Bridge, at 55th Street, during the height of the rush hour.

"It started really wobbling, like there was a fat lady on board," said Bruce Miller, who was walking his dog along the waterfront.

The twin-engine chopper's rear rotor flew off and smashed through the window of the heliport office. The aircraft sank 35 feet to the bottom of the river within seconds.

Two men managed to swim to the surface.

"They were hanging onto the embankment," said Miller. He gave his dog's leash to a cop and the heliport manager, who used it to pull one of the dangling men to land. The other was hauled out with a rope.

But the other two men aboard the copter remained submerged until they were pulled out by police and fire divers.

"I saw the people banging on the inside when it was in the water," said nurse Julie Ragusa, who was jogging along the water. "I wanted to jump in so badly to get them out."

NYPD diver John Drzal said he and his partner, Eric Tollefson, "found the helicopter completely upside down" under the water, with two men inside.

"The craft was mangled," Drzal said, and the rotors were dug into the sand. "We had to rip the doors

company general counsel

Reported by Christopher
Francesconi, Larry Celano,
Vigal Schleifer, Bill
Sanderson, Adam Miller,
Andy Geller and Tracy
Connor. Written by
Connor.

out and pull the passengers out."

Because there was only a foot of visibility in the 48-degree water, the divers had to feel their way through the rescue.

"Inside, the craft was black," Drzal said.

"We might as well have had our eyes closed," Tollefson added.

Tate was pronounced dead at New York Hospital.

Thurn, 52, and Serafino, 44, were in critical condition at the same hospital.

The second pilot, Bird, 50, was in stable condition at Metropolitan Hospital.

He told hospital workers the rudder malfunctioned.

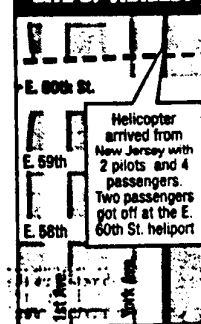
The BK 117 is built by a German-Japanese consortium, MBB-Kawasaki. It is widely used as a corporate and medical-transport aircraft.

Bob Murray, a spokesman at Colgate's Park Avenue headquarters, said: "We have two helicopters. They are used primarily to take passengers from our corporate headquarters to our research-and-development facility in Piscataway."

"It's like a shuttle that goes all day long."

He said the chopper that crashed was about 7 years old.

SITE OF TRAGEDY



LUCKY TO BE ALIVE! One of the survivors postures to rescue workers as he waits on a stretcher at the crash scene near the Midtown heliport.

HNC p155

EAST RIVER TRAGEDY

DOWN IN E. RIVER

Region is no stranger to these tragedies

By BILL SANDERSON
and BILL HOFFMANN

Helicopter disasters have plagued the metropolitan area for years.

It's a trend that doesn't surprise many New Yorkers who believe helicopters are a lot more dangerous than planes — a perception pilots say really isn't true.

Helicopters are really just as safe as planes, said commercial chopper pilot Derek Scott of Westchester. "There are a million things that can go wrong with either one."

"The city is also a tough place for midair emergencies because of the density of buildings and ... people."

He says helicopter mishaps get more publicity because they usually happen in and around Manhattan, which has three major heliports.

One of the most infamous helicopter crashes took the life of WNBC Radio reporter Jane Dornacker, whose chopper plunged into the Hudson River as she did a live traffic report on Oct. 22, 1986.

"Hit the water! Hit the water! Hit the water!" Dornacker pleaded with her pilot as the copter crashed. She died, the pilot lived.

Donald Trump cheated death when he skipped a flight on Oct. 10, 1989. But his three top Taj Mahal Casino execs and two pilots died when the Manhattan to Atlantic City chopper crashed on the Garden State Parkway.

Other local chopper disasters:

■ May 16, 1977: Five people died when a helicopter tipped over on the roof of the Thompson Arm (now MetLife) Building. The blades spun out of control, ripping into passers-by and hurling debris. One person was killed on the sidewalk 808 feet below.

■ April 18, 1979: Three people died and 15 were hurt when a helicopter out of New York crashed at Newark Airport.

■ May 1, 1988: A Japanese sightseer died when a tourist chopper's engine suffered "metal fatigue" and plunged into the East River near the 34th Street Heliport.

■ Feb. 10, 1990: Five people were rescued when a tourist helicopter went down in the East River near the 34th Street Heliport. One victim, a 13-year-old boy, later died.

■ Sept. 23, 1991: Long Island Police Officer Stephen Sullivan rented a chopper to practice for a pilot's license — and never returned. Three months later, his helicopter's tail section was found in water 15 miles from Montauk.

■ March 26, 1993: Central Park picnickers were surprised when a tourist helicopter made an emergency landing in the North Meadow. None of the 11 passengers were injured.

■ Aug. 31, 1993: A co-pilot died when a Coast Guard chopper crashed near Ambrose Light, at the entrance to New York Harbor.



RACE AGAINST DEATH: Rescuers work feverishly to save one of the men pulled from the chopper yesterday.

Michael Alexander

'Oh, my God! I couldn't believe it'

By CHRISTOPHER FRANCISCANI,
YIGAL SCHLEIFER
and TRACY CONNOR

The first sign that something was wrong was the noise.

"A loud pop," said Ephraim Urevbu, who raced to the window of his East 62nd Street apartment and saw a helicopter spinning wildly at the waterfront heliport.

"It was totally out of control," he said. "As it spun, the rear of the helicopter hit the embankment and it fell straight down into the water."

Monica Cimachowicz, a flight attendant, was jogging along the river's edge when

she spotted the aircraft 15 feet in the air and knew instantly that something was terribly wrong.

"It looked like it was staggering, struggling," she said. Small pieces started falling off and blue sparks were coming from the propeller. It spun around four or five times.

She could see the pilot and co-pilot.

"It was just every terrifying look on their faces," she said. Then the tail of the twin-engine copter smacked the embankment between water and land.

The rear rotor broke off and went soaring into the heliport

"Small pieces started falling off and blue sparks were coming from the propeller."

MONICA CIMACHOWICZ

office, breaking a window as the four or five people inside ducked for cover.

"Imagine sitting in your office and having this thing come flying through your window," Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Esen said later.

The aircraft was completely submerged almost instantly.

"It landed in the water. It listed to one side and, within seconds, it disappeared into

the water," said computer consultant Rave Schwartz, who was on a Roosevelt Island shuttle bus, looking out the window at the heliport.

"It was very fast, I said, 'Oh, my God! I couldn't believe it. I've never seen anything like this.'"

Those strolling or running along the waterfront hurried to the site and offered help. People threw life rafts from

the heliport into the water.

Celia Sarno, a nurse from Long Island, was standing on the water's edge near 64th Street when the crash took place. She got to the scene in time to see two men pulled from the water.

"One guy was lying on his stomach, spitting up water," she said.

"He had definitely taken in a lot of water when he came up," said Julie Ragusa, a nurse who had been jogging with Cimachowicz.

About 10 minutes later, police divers brought up two more men.

"They were blue in the face and limp," Sarno said.

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EAST RIVER TRAGEDY

Medic didn't think twice before putting life on line

By TRACY CONNOR,
CHRISTOPHER
FRANCESCANI
and ANDY GELLER

Paramedic Jeffrey Hinton didn't hesitate for a moment when he saw the bubbles coming up from the East River.

He knew what that meant. People were down there. In four minutes, they would be brain dead.

The police divers hadn't arrived. Somebody had to do something.

Hinton, 44, tore off his belt and shoes and dove into the murky water — fouled by aviation fuel.

"I'm not the kind of person to do this sort of thing," the Vietnam vet told The Post last night. "I've got six kids."

"But faced with something like this, what are you going to do? You're going to have to live with yourself."

Hinton, who is also a city

firefighter, dove once. It was pitch black. He couldn't see a thing.

"I hit the water and the shock of the cold took my breathe away. I could only get down five feet."

The bubbles were right in front of me, but I couldn't find the body."

Hinton dove again. Still nothing.

"This time, I got down about seven feet, but it was so dark and muddy I couldn't see a thing."

The water was 48 degrees. Hinton could feel the strength draining away from his arms and legs.

"I felt myself going out. Luckily I managed to get to the buoy."

Hinton's partner, Jonathan Rose, 31, meanwhile, had taken off his belt and shoes and was waiting by the shore.

He pulled Hinton out and then took him to their ambulance on a stretcher.



JEFFREY HINTON
Took the plunge.

Hinton got out of his wet clothes and by the time he had finished, divers had pulled out Colgate-Palmolive executive Craig Tate.

Hinton and Rose, who work for Lenox Hill Hospital, swung into action.

They put Tate on the stretcher that had carried Hinton to the ambulance and tried to resuscitate him. Then they drove him to New York Hospital, where he died.

Both paramedics returned to Lenox Hill, where they spent two hours being treated for exposure.

Hinton, who lives in Liberty, in upstate Sullivan County, said:

"I feel I did what I had to do. You're going to have to sleep with what you've done."

Others at the crash site also helped rescue victims.

Electrician Bruce Miller, 50, was walking with his German Shepherd, Max, in a park near the heliport early yesterday evening.

"I looked up and saw the helicopter go straight up, wobble and wobble, and then go down," said Miller, who lives just two blocks away.

"I watch the copters take off and land all the time, so I knew there was going to be a crash," he said.

He and Max sprinted to the water, where the Colgate-Palmolive corporate chopper was already submerged.

"There were two guys near the bulkhead, in the water. They were trying to get up and they couldn't," Miller said.

A cop and the airport manager were about four feet away, and they were trying to retrieve the victims by throwing a rope at them. But one shivering man couldn't get a grip on it.

"I took the leash off Max and gave it to the airport manager, and the guy in the water managed to slip the leash over his wrist — and they pulled him to safety."

The rescued man threw up water and was badly shaken, but seemed to be otherwise fine, he said.



LIFESAVER: Bruce Miller volunteered his dog Max's leash so that rescuers could pull victims from the murky waters of the East River.

Sam Costanza

Neighbors and pals mourn devoted dad

By ADAM MILLER,
ANDY GELLER
and ALEXI FRIEDMAN

The Colgate-Palmolive executive killed in yesterday's chopper crash spent his entire career with the company — working his way up from product manager to a top international executive.

Chief technological officer Craig Tate, 51 — listed fifth on the company's roster of corporate officers — died of a heart attack after the helicopter spun out of control and crashed.

In the New Caanan, Conn., neighborhood where Tate, his wife Sherry and their four children have lived for 20 years, residents were in shock.

"Whatever you would want to say that's nice about a person, that's what you would say about him," said one woman, who asked that her name not be printed.

William Luckie had known Tate for 10 years.

"He was a nice guy," Luckie said. "He had a large family with a lot of children. This is very tragic."

A graduate of Stanford University with an MBA from Dartmouth, Tate joined Colgate in 1969 as a product manager.

He was named marketing director of Colgate-U.K. in 1977. Three years later, he became general manager of Colgate-Spain.

In 1981, he became a vice president of the company's global business-development group in charge of dental care products. Five

years later, he was promoted to vice president of worldwide new products, overseeing the company's global expansion.

Tate was elected an officer of Colgate in 1989. In 1992, he became president of the Far East division, stepping up to chief technological officer in 1994.

The other high-ranking Colgate employee in the helicopter was James Serafino, of Stamford, Conn., the company's vice president and associate general counsel for global business and technology.

Serafino — who had been president of the Stamford Board of Education — was critically injured.

"Jim's a terrific family man, married with two sons," family friend Michael Cacace said.

He said Serafino, who worked for Nestle Foods before joining Colgate, had no fear of flying.

"These helicopter trips are regular occurrences for him — nothing new," Cacace said.

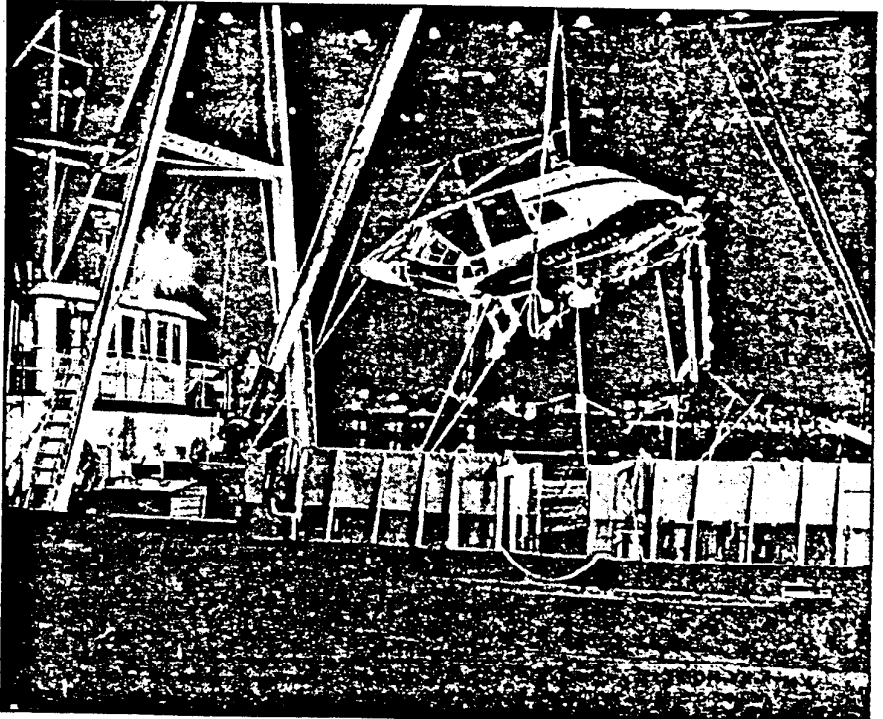
Colgate pilot Edward Thurn, of Sparta, N.J., was also in critical condition.

A second pilot, Rick Bird, of Morristown, N.J., was in stable condition.

Bird's wife, Susan, said: "He was so happy to see me, and I said to him, 'I'm so glad you're OK and you're alive.'"

"I was so scared when I saw this chopper," she said.

Bird, 50, has worked for Colgate-Palmolive for two decades, she said.



GRIM HAUL: The chopper's mangled fuselage is winched from the East River late last night.

Michael Alexander

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SPORTS ★ ★ ★ ★ FINAL

JACKIE'S NIGHT

Prez, widow hail No. 42 at Shea

STORIES ON PAGES 6, 7 & SPORTS



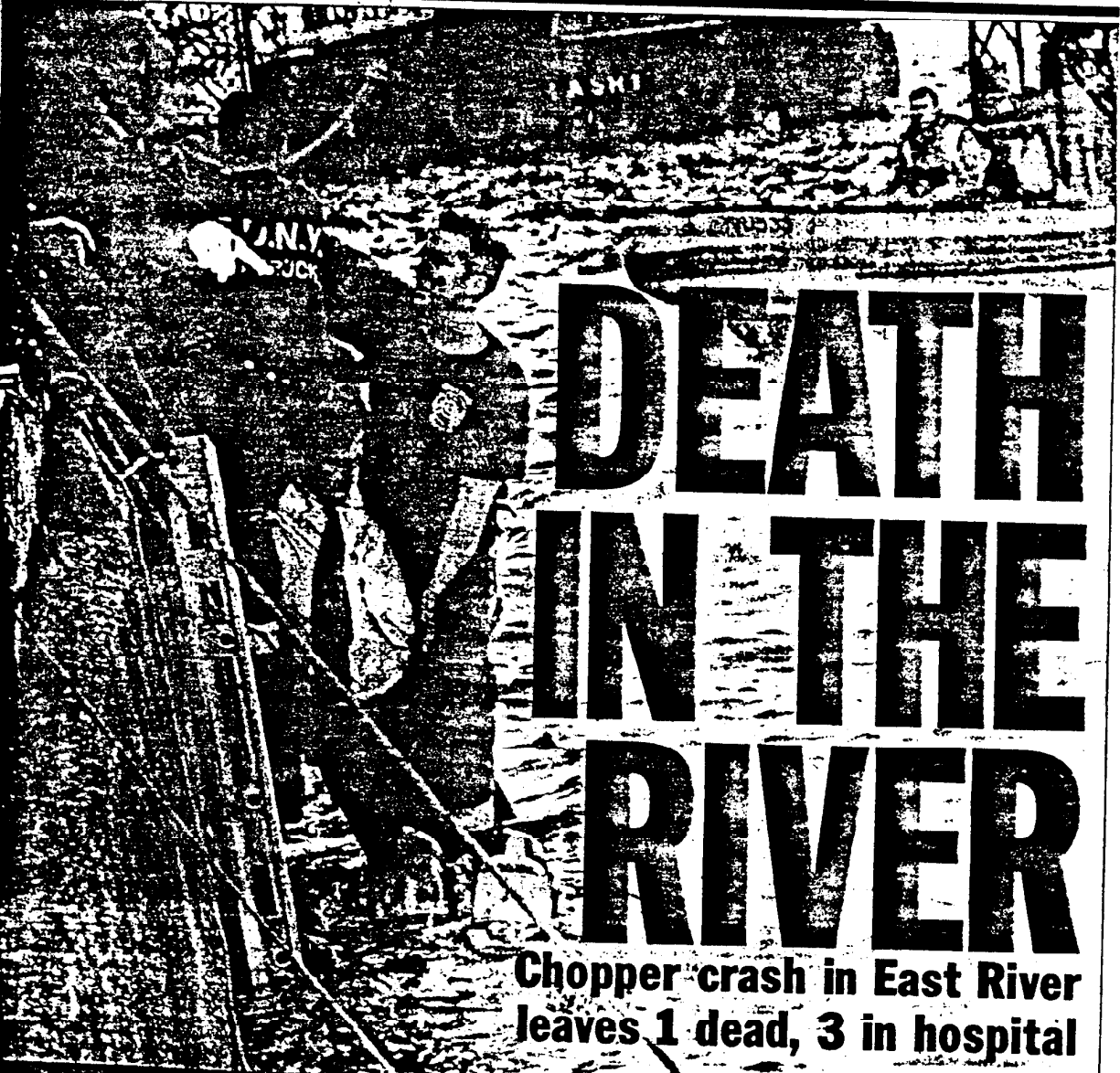
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NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

Wednesday, April 16, 1997



DEATH IN THE RIVER

Chopper crash in East River
leaves 1 dead, 3 in hospital

STORIES AND MORE DRAMATIC PHOTOS ON PAGES 2 & 3

ANDREW BARRON/DAILY NEWS

Cont.

HNC p158

CHOPPER TRAGEDY

COPTER IN



POLICE DIVERS leap into East River to rescue two trapped helicopter passengers in yesterday's ordeal.

Divers took plunge, saved 2

By LARRY SUTTON
and CORKY SIEMASZKO
Daily News Staff Writers

Police divers leaped into the choppy East River yesterday knowing they had only minutes to find two trapped helicopter passengers.

"We went down about 35 feet," said Officer John Drzal. "The helicopter was stuck in the mud upside down. You couldn't see anything. It was all black down there."

Drzal said that all he and his partner, Eric Tollefsen, could do was "feel around using our hands."

Grooving in the murky depths, it took the divers several seconds to find the cockpit of the 43-foot-long Eurocopter BK 117.

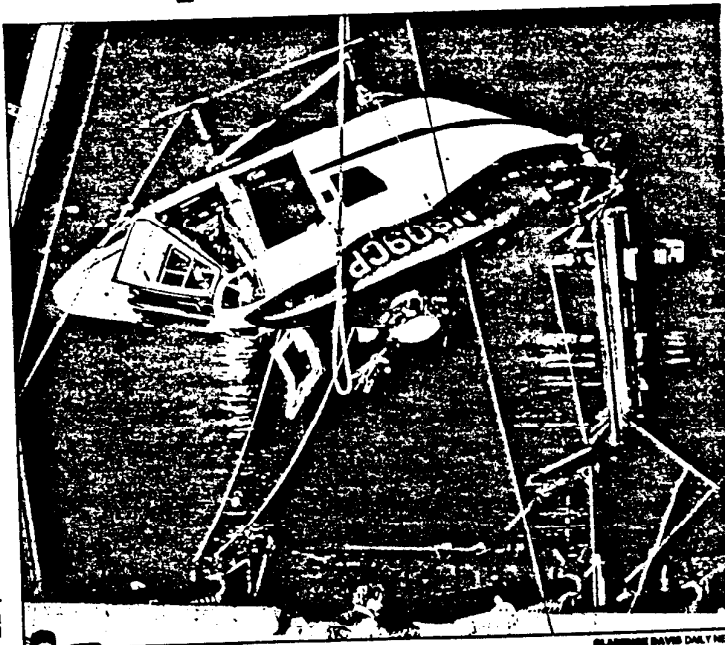
After several more seconds of searching, Drzal found what he'd been looking for — an unconscious man in business attire.

"I grabbed a guy's arm, and then I passed him over to my partner," said Drzal. Then, "I found a second man and I took him. Both were unconscious and floating in the cabin."

Drzal said they "pulled them out and up."

"Fortunately, the helicopter was very close to the sea wall so people could grab them and take them away," said Drzal. "We went back down one more time to see if there was anyone else in there. But it was empty, so we came back up."

Less than an hour earlier, Drzal and Tollefsen had been winding down after a 10-mile jog when they were called. Their hearts started racing



SALVAGED: Wreckage of helicopter is lifted from river by Army Corps of Engineers crane last night.

again. "We heard the alarm and went straight into the helicopter," said Drzal, who is based at Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field.

"It's fully equipped for situations like this."

On the five-minute flight to Manhattan, the divers changed out of sweat suits, donned wet suits and learned

they were heading for the East River.

Drzal has been with the Police Department for 11 years. Tollefsen is a 10-year veteran of the force.

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Wednesday, April 16, 1997 • DAILY NEWS

Daily News April 16, 1997 P2
HNC P159

The Metro Section

L+ B1

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1997

The New York Times

Executive Dies and 3 Are Hurt in an East River Copter Crash

By MATTHEW PURDY

A corporate executive was killed and three other people were injured when their helicopter crashed into the East River moments after lifting off from the heliport at 60th Street in Manhattan.

Witnesses said the helicopter plunged into the river about 15 feet from shore after the rear rotor flew off the aircraft and lodged in the heliport's one-story terminal. Police officials said the pilot and co-pilot of the six-seat BK-117 helicopter escaped on their own, but the two passengers were underwater for 10 to 15 minutes before being pulled from the helicopter by police divers.

The passengers were both executives of Colgate-Palmolive and were riding in a helicopter owned by the company. The police identified the dead passenger as Craig Tate, of New Canaan, Conn., who was in his 50's and identified in corporate records as the company's chief technical officer.

Robert A. Murray, the company's vice president for corporate relations, said the helicopter was one of two owned by the company and was used to ferry employees between its corporate headquarters in New York and its research and development plant in Piscataway, N.J.

The helicopter had just come from Piscataway, had let off two passengers in Manhattan and was taking off for White Plains about 5:35 P.M. when the accident occurred, said Police Commissioner Howard Safir.

"It appears the tail rotor came off the helicopter for whatever reason and the heli-

copter went into the river," Mr. Safir said. It was the sixth helicopter crash in 12 years in the East River, and came as traffic has been increasing at East River heliports, drawing complaints from residents and politicians.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it was investigating whether the helicopter hit the building as it rose, knocking off the rotor. But witnesses said the aircraft was above the building when the rear rotor sparked and broke off.

"It rose about 30, 35 feet and it started sparking in the rear," said Jose Collado, a limo-cab driver who was waiting at the heliport for someone to arrive. "You heard cracking in the back and then the helicopter turned and went into the water."

The accident happened at rush hour in the middle of a maze of traffic. The heliport, bounded to the west by the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive, is just north of the Queensboro Bridge and the tramway to Roosevelt Island. Nearby streets and esplanades were full of joggers and strollers taking advantage of the late afternoon sunshine.

Julie Ragusa and Monica Cimashowitz had stopped to stretch at the heliport after jogging, and they watched as the helicopter took off and began wobbling as if it were struggling against the wind blowing up the river. After the rear of the aircraft broke off, it spun around four or five times before it flipped over and landed upside down in the

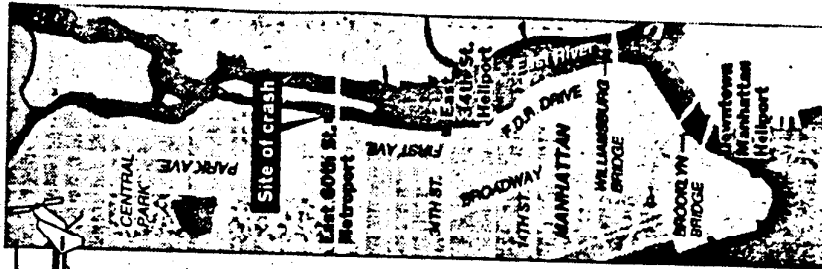
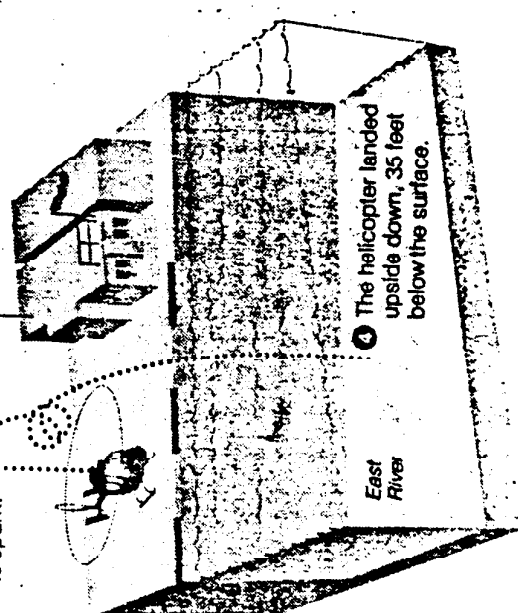
Continued on Page B5

Here is how witnesses described the crash of a BK-117 helicopter taking off yesterday about 5:35 P.M. from the East 60th Street Metroport.



BK-117

- 1 At a height of about 35 feet, the helicopter's tail rotor began to spark.
- 2 The tail rotor broke off and hit the heliport terminal.
- 3 The helicopter spun several times and then fell into the river.



The New York Times, Illustration by John Pagano

HNC P160

Executive Dies in East River Copter Crash

Continued From Page B1

water. "It just didn't sound right when it was taking off," Ms. Cimashowitz said. "It didn't sound like it had enough power. It looked like it was fighting against the wind."

She said she could see the people inside the helicopter when it was still up in the air. "They knew it was going down," said Ms. Cimashowitz, a Trans World Airlines flight attendant.

"They were trying to get out," she said. "I saw them knocking on the windows. They were trying to get out. They looked terrified."

By the time police divers and Emergency Medical Service workers arrived, the pilot and co-pilot had got out of the helicopter, but the two passengers were stuck inside the heli-

copter in the darkness of 35 feet of water.

"We couldn't see anything," said Police Officer John Drzal, a member of the police scuba team that came to the scene from Floyd Bennett Field. "It was black."

The officers said they searched for an opening in the helicopter, broke the door off its hinges and pulled out the two unconscious passengers.

Mr. Tate was pronounced dead on arrival at the New York Hospital from cardiac arrest. The other passenger, Jim Seraphino of Stamford, Conn., a vice president in the legal department at Colgate-Palmolive, was in cardiac arrest when he was rescued and was listed in critical condition. The pilot, Edward Thurn, 52, of Sparta, N.J., apparently experienced respiratory arrest after escaping the helicopter and was listed in

critical condition. The co-pilot, Rick Bird, of Whippany, N.J., was in stable condition.

Mr. Murray, the Colgate-Palmolive spokesman, said the helicopter had been owned by the company for eight years and had no known maintenance problems. Jerome Hauer, the director of the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, said the type of helicopter that crashed, made by Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm and Kawasaki, had a reputation for durability and was favored as an emergency aircraft. According to Federal Aviation Administration records, the helicopter was built in 1989 and registered to Colgate-Palmolive in February 1990.

Residents of the East Side said last night that they had expressed increasing safety concerns about the growing helicopter traffic along the East River. The East 60th Street Metroport, which is operated by Johnson Controls Inc. on land it leases from the city, is one of two heliports on the East Side of Manhattan. In 1995, there were 22,833 takeoffs and landings from that heliport, 16 percent of all takeoffs and landings from Manhattan's four major heliports.

"There's too much helicopter traffic for the city," said Susan Natale, a neighborhood resident who said she attended a local community board meeting on the subject Monday night. "It's an environmental issue and a safety issue."

Karyn Margolis, a spokeswoman for United States Representative Carolyn B. Maloney of Manhattan said last night, "This terrible tragedy is a perfect demonstration of why we need helicopter regulations in the city. We're just lucky this helicopter landed in the water and not in the streets."

In recent weeks, residents and officials have met with representatives of the F.A.A. to express concern about the helicopter traffic.

Last night, with the watery crash scene lit by spotlights from police boats, police divers readied the helicopter to be fished from the river, and an Army Corps of Engineers barge moved into place and carried the aircraft back to the heliport.

The violent end to the brief flight was etched in the metal. The tail of the helicopter hung by wires. The left side of the cabin was dented and gashed. The top of the helicopter was torn open, its body riddled with cracks.

Short Trip Home From Plant Ends in Tragedy for Executive

By DAVID M. HERSZENHORN

Craig B. Tate, the executive who died yesterday in the crash of a Colgate-Palmolive Company helicopter, was a driven corporate man who climbed the company ladder and an equally driven family man who enjoyed barbecues and pool parties with his family, neighbors in Connecticut said last night.

Mr. Tate, who was pronounced dead of cardiac arrest upon arrival at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, was pulled from the wrecked helicopter in the murk of the East River together with James M. Serafino, 44, a lawyer for Colgate-Palmolive, who survived the crash.

Mr. Serafino, who is married with two children and is also from Connecticut, was in critical condition at the hospital last night.

Robert A. Murray, vice president for corporate relations at Colgate-Palmolive, said the helicopter had flown to New York from the company's development plant in Piscataway, N.J., and was headed to White Plains. But he would not release information on the victims of the crash, citing concern for their families.

But newspaper clippings and corporate reference books show that at Colgate-Palmolive, the multibillion-dollar consumer products manufacturer, Mr. Tate, who was in his 50's, rose to the position of chief technical officer, according to the Standard & Poor's Register.

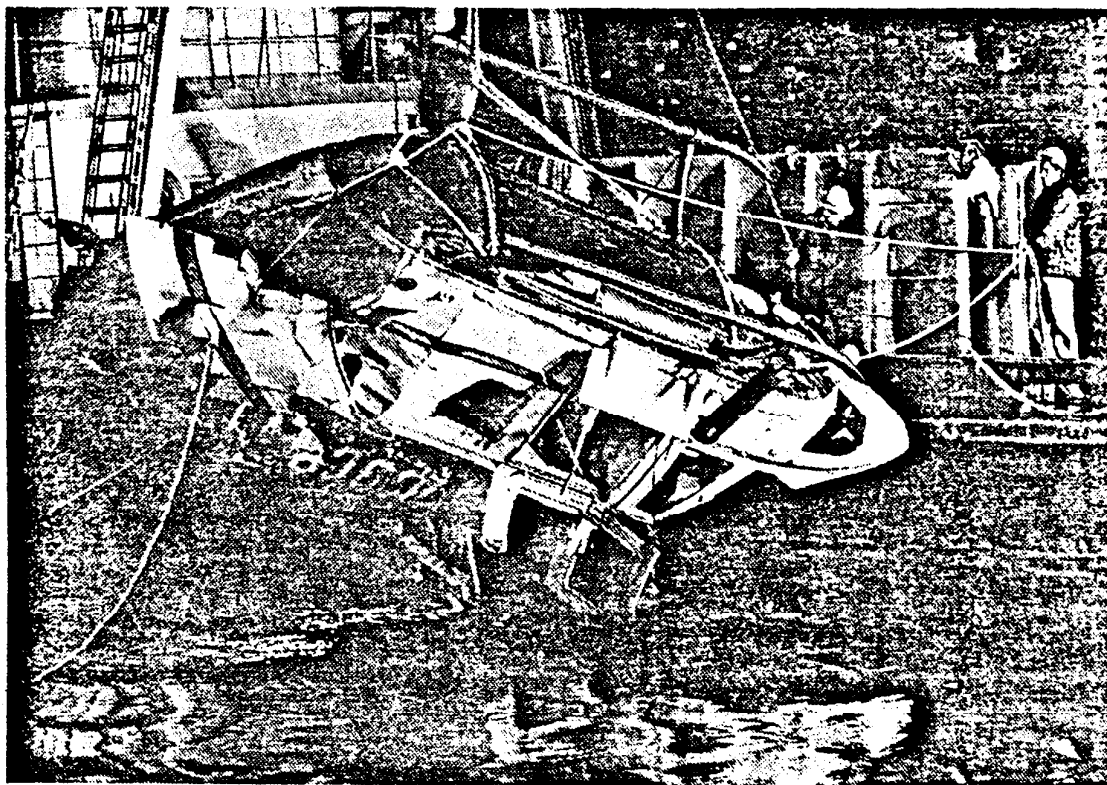
But while dedicated to his work, which often sent him traveling around the world, his neighbors said, he loved to be at home on his leafy street in New Canaan, Conn., where there was a swimming pool in the backyard.

"I used to take the train home with him from New York every day and he would bury himself in his work because he said when he got home he wanted to spend all his time with his family, helping his kids with their homework," said Joseph Espeso, who has lived across the street from Mr. Tate for 14 years.

Mr. Serafino, Colgate-Palmolive's vice president and senior associate general counsel for technology and marketing, lives with his wife and two children in Stamford, the same city where he grew up, said his sister-in-law, Sally Serafino.

HNC DT61

I T Y



Philip Greenberg for The New York Times

Rescuers pulled the wreckage of a helicopter from the East River last night. The helicopter went down near the Queensboro Bridge, the authorities said, killing a corporate executive and injuring three others aboard.

6 Copters Have Crashed in East River Since '85

By TONY MARCANO

The East River has been the site of six helicopter accidents in the last 12 years. And while the cause of yesterday's crash remains under investigation, in most such helicopter accidents around the city the culprit was mechanical failure, rather than pilot error.

Four of the helicopter accidents in the East River since 1985 were attributed to engine failure. In another instance, the pilot told investigators that a sudden gust of wind blew his craft off course.

Before yesterday's crash, the most recent incident was in October 1993, when four tourists from Paris escaped injury when a sightseeing helicopter owned by Island Helicopter of Garden City lost power and was forced to make an emergency landing in the East River near Wall Street. Several months earlier, a helicopter owned by the same Long Island company made an emergency landing in Central Park under similar circumstances.

Island Helicopter also owned three helicopters that crashed between 1985 and 1990. All of those crashes occurred at the East 34th Street Heliport and resulted in fatalities.

On April 27, 1985, a helicopter that was taking off from the East 34th Street Heliport plunged into the river. Three years later, a man was killed and four others were hurt when an Island Helicopter aircraft crashed into the river while attempting to land at the same heliport. On Feb. 11, 1990, a 14-year-old boy died after being trapped in the cold water when a sightseeing helicopter went down. It was in that incident that the pilot cited weather-related problems.

In another incident involving an Island Helicopter craft, five people were rescued unharmed on April 1, 1991, when a helicopter whose engine failed ditched in the East River.

Island Helicopter, which also operates as the National Helicopter Corporation of America, has long been a nemesis of Manhattan residents. As the main tenant of the East 34th Street Heliport, it is responsible for

nearly 40 percent of the 400 daily helicopter takeoffs and landings at the city's four heliports, according to a study by the city's Economic Development Corporation.

Traffic at all four heliports has been on the rise, mostly because of the increasing popularity of airborne sightseeing tours. From 1994 to 1995, the number of takeoffs and landings increased by about 11 percent at the East 34th Street and West 30th Street Heliports, 2 percent at the East 60th Street Heliport and 1.3 percent at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport near the Battery.

Residents have long complained that the helicopter noise has been excessive and have claimed that National and other tour operators fly low and slow to allow better viewing for sightseers. Responding to those complaints, the city, which owns the East 34th Street Heliport, had attempted to cut by 50 percent the number of flights there, but a Federal judge ruled in January that the city had insufficient grounds to justify the restriction.

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OVER



MANGLED: Cops yesterday eye wreckage of the helicopter that crashed into the East River, killing one and injuring three, including James Serafino (right).

N.Y. Post Lutz C. Ribeiro

Pilots say crew probably didn't have time to react

By BILL SANDERSON,
SUSAN RUBINOWITZ
and IKIMULISA SOCKWELL

The crew of the helicopter that crashed at the East 60th Street Heliport probably had too little time to respond when their rear rotor malfunctioned, other pilots said yesterday.

National Transportation Safety Board investigator Robert Hancock said witnesses heard a "loud bang" as the chopper took off, spun around twice and fell into the East River.

The chopper's rear rotor flew off into the heliport's terminal building, and the entire rear rotor assembly fell off.

Hancock declined to speculate on what exactly went wrong.

When it [the rear rotor] fails, the ten-

dency is for the helicopter to go around in circles," said Frank Jensen, president of the International Helicopter Association.

Jensen, who has flown choppers for 42 years, said pilots can land safely if rear rotor failure occurs at higher altitudes.

But Jensen said that because the Colgate-Palmolive chopper malfunctioned on takeoff, the pilots probably had no time to respond.

Federal Aviation Administration records show pilot Rick Bird had never been involved in any aviation incidents, while the second pilot, Edward Thurn, made an emergency landing in Staten Island in 1993.

FAA records show only one mechanical problem with the crashed Eurocopter BK-117 craft.

In September 1993, the main rotor bellows — a rubber sleeve covering moving parts on the main rotor — fell off.

Hancock said the main rotor bellows was intact on the crashed copter.

Two years ago, the FAA ordered Eurocopter to modify latches on the engine access doors of BK-117s after five incidents in which the doors tore off. The doomed copter's engine access doors were intact.

After Tuesday's crash, the NYPD helicopter rescue unit at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn was alerted. Two chopper-borne divers arrived at 5:48 p.m., 12 minutes after the initial call.

Officers Eric Tollefsen and John Drzal found the chopper's cockpit upside down under 50 feet of water — with the two Colgate executives still inside.

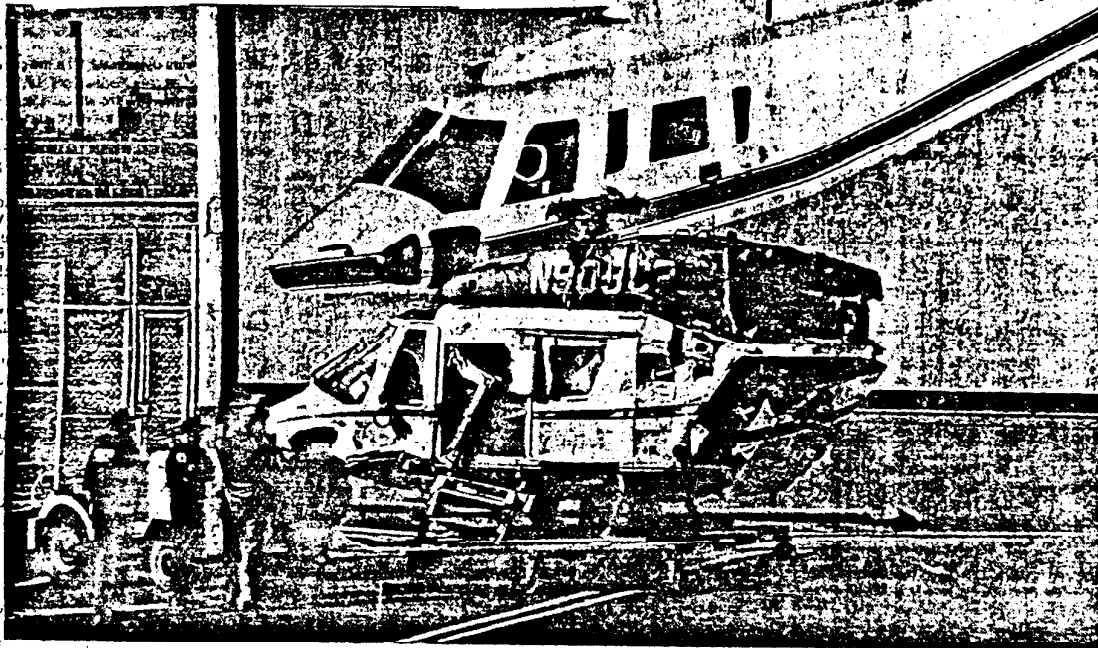


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B3

CITY

Investigators Say Part of Helicopter's Tail Broke Off Before Fatal Crash Into River



The helicopter that crashed into the East River on Tuesday, killing a corporate executive. Investigators said a three-foot tail section had broken off.

Praise for Executive Who Died in Helicopter Crash

By MONTE WILLIAMS

Craig B. Tate, the Colgate-Palmolive executive who died Tuesday when a company helicopter plunged into the East River, was as much a family man and a man of faith as he was a businessman.

Mr. Tate, who was on his way to White Plains Airport, climbed the corporate ladder in a 28-year career with Colgate-Palmolive, handling a number of overseas assignments, including a stint as vice president for global marketing. But friends say he still carved out time to help his four children with their homework and to sing in the church choir. [Obituary, page B13.]

"He was a prime example of a Christian corporate executive who refused to separate his business life from his family life from his faith life," said the Rev. Gary A. Wilburn, senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan, Conn., where Mr. Tate was a deacon, a church elder and the church clerk.

Mr. Wilburn recalled that Mr. Tate, 51, had flown to New Canaan, his home of 20 years, from Indonesia when he was president of Colgate-Palmolive's Far East division, so he could go Christmas caroling and attend his children's birthday parties.

"I asked him, 'How do you find the time to do everything?'" Mr. Wilburn recalled. "And he said: 'I don't

A man who did not put business before family and faith.

have the time. I choose to make the time, because it's important to me."

Robert Murray, a Colgate-Palmolive spokesman, who once reported to Mr. Tate, recalled him as "a great intellect" and a great tennis player, always carrying a tennis racket with him on his global travels. Like Mr. Wilburn, he was struck by Mr. Tate's ability to juggle the professional and the personal.

"He was an amazing person, a bright hard worker, yet an incredible family man, who had great love for his wife and family, and was a valued member of his church," Mr. Murray said. "His ability to balance was amazing."

Mr. Tate, who was named Colgate-Palmolive's chief technological officer in 1994, was pronounced dead on arrival at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. He was pulled from the wrecked helicopter in the muck of the East River together with James M. Serafino, 44, a lawyer for Colgate-Palmolive, who survived the

crash.

Mr. Serafino, a Stamford, Conn., resident who is married and the father of two children, was unconscious and remained in critical condition yesterday in the hospital's surgical intensive care unit. A hospital spokesman said he was being treated for respiratory failure, exposure, hypothermia and the effects of near-drowning.

"He is another wonderful individual," Mr. Murray said. "He was terrific at simplifying complex legal issues and making it understandable to me so that I could explain it to the media. And he did it with a great sense of humor."

Outside the Tate home, a rambling brown farmhouse-style colonial in the Hoyt Farm section of New Canaan, cars lined the street as friends and family members walked past a weeping cherry tree to pay their respects to Mr. Tate's wife, Sharon, and his children Andrew, 16, Melissa, 14, and Carrie, 11. Another son, Christopher, 20, a student at Stanford University, Mr. Tate's alma mater, was en route home from California.

"He was much more mature than the rest of us," David McKane, a friend since business school at Dartmouth, said of the dead executive. "I had a great deal of respect for him. He was the kind of person who helped you with everything. He was a first-



Craig B. Tate, 51, Colgate-Palmolive's chief technological officer.

class guy with a first-class mind."

The principal of New Canaan High School, David E. Abbey, recalled how Mr. Tate used his network of friends and business contacts to organize a school choir's trips to Hong Kong and South America.

"He was one of the special people," Mr. Abbey recalled. "He really was."

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Cont.

Cause of East River Accident Still Unclear

By MATTHEW PURDY

Federal investigators said yesterday that the helicopter that plunged into the East River Tuesday, killing a corporate executive, crashed after a three-foot section of the aircraft's tail that included the rear rotor broke off shortly after takeoff from the 60th Street heliport.

Bob Hancock, an air safety investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, said the BK-117 helicopter was operating normally until it was approximately 30 feet above the heliport landing pad. At that moment, a "loud bang" and sparks came from the rear of the helicopter, and it spun to the right before dropping upside down into the river, he said. The tail section of the helicopter flew through the window of the heliport terminal building.

Mr. Hancock said there was no indication that the helicopter, which was owned by the Colgate-Palmolive Company, hit the one-story heliport building as it took off, which city officials said Tuesday night was a possible cause of the accident. Mr. Hancock also said that the cockpit controls appeared to be set appropriately for takeoff, an indication the two-man crew was following procedures. In addition, he said there appeared to be no problem with the helicopter's engines.

Investigators interviewed Rick Bird, the helicopter's co-pilot, who escaped without serious injuries and was released from the hospital yesterday. The pilot, Edward Thurn, 52, of Sparta, N.J., and one of the passengers, James M. Serafino, 44, of Stamford, Conn., a corporate lawyer for Colgate-Palmolive, remained in critical condition yesterday at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center after nearly drowning, according to a statement from the hospital. Mr. Serafino was unconscious, but Mr. Thurn had regained consciousness.

The crash took the life of Craig B. Tate, 51, of New Canaan, Conn., Colgate's chief technical officer.

Although Mr. Hancock said investigators had not determined what caused the accident, the crash added fuel to protests from residents and politicians from the East Side who had been complaining of helicopter traffic because of noise and safety concerns.

While the debate intensifies, statistics from the Federal Aviation Administration show helicopter traffic is actually lower in the city than it was in 1990, when there were 164,800 takeoffs and landings. In 1991, the number dropped to 134,000, largely because many pilots went to the Persian Gulf War, aviation officials said. Since then, traffic has risen to 154,000 takeoffs or landings last year, though that number was down 3,000 from 1995.

Investigators said it could be a week before they issued a preliminary report on what caused the accident. And yesterday they said they did not know yet whether the helicopter crashed because of an internal mechanical problem or because something, perhaps debris kicked up during the takeoff, hit the aircraft.

The helicopter was hoisted from

the river late Tuesday night and was being stored in a hangar yesterday at the heliport, just north of the Queensboro Bridge. Its body, bashed in at its rear and left side, rested on a huge dolly. And the tail section, removed by technicians after fishing the aircraft from the river, sat on another dolly along with the ruptured section of the tail and rear rotor that was removed from the heliport building.

Investigators said a review of the repair records for the helicopter did not suggest any problems. Federal records show that the helicopter previously experienced a few problems, including a cracked fuel line and a maintenance hatch that once opened in flight and hit the main rotor, but there was no indication that any previous problem might have contributed to Tuesday's accident.

Aviation experts described the BK-117 model as an efficient, safe helicopter whose large cabin made it popular as an emergency medical vehicle. Federal safety board records show that there have been 10 crashes of that model since 1985 but that most were blamed on pilots' hitting objects, with only one attributed to a mechanical breakdown. But in that crash, a piece of directional control equipment was found to have been improperly installed during a maintenance session.

Frank Jensen, president of the Helicopter Association International, which represents helicopter operators and manufacturers, said the BK-117 "is well proven to be a good, stable performer." Mr. Jensen said that Colgate-Palmolive was a member of his group and that he was acquainted with the helicopter that crashed. He said the helicopter was outfitted with special navigational and flight control equipment that could be operated by a single pilot, instead of a two-person crew. He said such corporate aircraft were usually very safe "because the C.E.O. wants the best; they buy the best equipment and they maintain it well."

As the investigation began in earnest yesterday, opponents of helicopter traffic in New York — who are particularly incensed by noise from sightseeing helicopters — said yesterday that the crash underscored their concerns.

Even though helicopter traffic was not cited as a cause of the crash, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani last night reiterated that he wanted to reduce helicopter traffic significantly in the city. At a town meeting on the Upper West Side last night, he promised "probably a 30 to 40 percent reduction" in helicopter flights in the next four or five months. He also said there was a good chance that tourist flights would be banned from the 34th Street heliport.

The helicopter traffic does not bother everyone. Laurence Berg, who lives on 57th Street between First Avenue and Sutton Place and was walking his dog near the heliport yesterday, said: "In all honesty, it's not that noisy. I'd rather that something be done about the 5 o'clock traffic jam, with the horn blowing and impatience, or the ambulances and firetrucks that go by."

Cont.

New York Times

April 17, 1997

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HNC p165

HE JUST MISSED 'COPTER CRASH

A Colgate-Palmolive technology expert who got off a helicopter seconds before it plunged into the East River was back at work yesterday, shaken and feeling "strange" about his brush with death.

Gokbora Uran, 30, told The Post he was still amazed he'd walked away from the helicopter just before it spun wildly out of control and crashed into the East River — killing a colleague.

"I wouldn't say I feel lucky," said Uran, manager of global information technology for Colgate-Palmolive.

"I would say I feel strange. One minute, I was on the helicopter and the next minute, it crashed into the water."

Uran and another employee, Jane Walton, were riding on the helicopter with Craig Tate and James Serafino from a company site in Piscataway, N.J., on Tuesday.

Uran and Walton got off the copter at the 60th Street heliport while Tate and Serafino stayed aboard for a trip to White Plains.

Tate, 51, was killed in the crash that occurred seconds later. Serafino, 44, and one of two co-pilots were critically injured.

Reported by Larry Celona, Angela C. Allen, Angela Mosconi and Maria Alvarez. Written by Cathy Burke.

copter with [Walton]. We started to walk away. The helicopter never stopped. There was a wall between us and the water, and I turned around and I saw the helicopter lost control in the air, and then I saw it dive down head first and then I heard it hit the water."

Uran said he knew both fellow executive passengers "by first name, but not personally."

"I didn't work with them, but I feel bad for them and for their families," he said.

Walton refused to talk to reporters about the tragedy.

At New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, the wife and daughter of Serafino emerged after a visit red-eyed and appearing exhausted. Both refused to talk to reporters before they were whisked away in a chauffeured Cadillac limousine.

April 17, 1997 P.5

New York
POST

Continued from Page 5

Corporate executives at the hospital said they were prohibited from talking about the crash or Serafino's condition.

The hospital said the surviving executive was in critical but stable condition, and had yet to regain consciousness.

Pilot Edward Thurn, 52, also was in critical condition.

Both were being treated for exposure, hypothermia and near-drowning.

In the wealthy suburb of New Canaan, Conn., where the Tate family lives in a sprawling ranch home, neighbors and fellow church members at the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan, were shocked at the tragedy.

They described Tate as an active church member, devoted Sunday school teacher, beloved father and loving husband.

Tate's wife, Sherry, was in seclusion with the couple's four children, Christopher, a Stanford University student; Andrew, a senior at New Canaan HS; Melissa, a freshman at the same school, and Carrie, who is in junior high.

"We're all very devastated," said one church member. "He was really a bright light here."

"He was very generous and giving, and it really permeated all he did."

Church spokeswoman Ann Hallstein called the Tate family "a very integral part of the church."

"Tragedy has struck the whole church because of his death," she said.

Similar praise was heaped on Serafino — the married father of two sons — in his Stamford community.

"Everybody knows Jim," said Jim Tsirlis, the owner of the De Rubeis Bros. Deli near the Serafino home. "Everybody hopes he makes it."

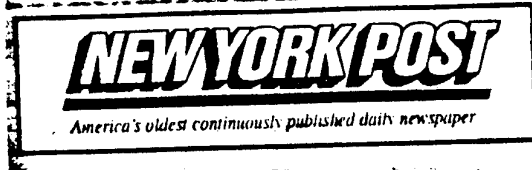
An across-the-street neighbor broke down in tears.

"He's a great guy, and we're all praying for him," said the neighbor. "Everybody is pulling for him."

There was some good news at least for the family of co-pilot Richard Bird, who managed to swim out of the submerged helicopter after it crashed.

Bird, 25, was released from Metropolitan Hospital after being treated for hypothermia, and returned to his Morris County, N.J., home, and wife.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 1997

The chopper menace

The cause of Tuesday's crash of a corporate helicopter at the 60th Street heliport, which killed one person and injured three, is under investigation by federal transportation officials. But no mystery attends the fact that — tragic as the accident was — things could have been a great deal worse.

The East 60th Street helipad is on a tiny strip of land jutting out into the East River. It is bordered by the 59th Street Bridge, the Roosevelt Island tram and many tall buildings; a chopper down on nearby York Avenue and 61st Street could have caused many more casualties.

All this underlines a disquieting phenomenon: the proliferation of helicopter flights in the skies over and around Manhattan and the potential dangers that result.

Copter takeoffs and landings in the area have been on the rise over the past few years. Just since 1991, there has been a 23 percent increase in such flights

in New York City.

The chopper frenzy also touches on quality-of-life considerations. In some parts of the city, the slap of rotor blades has become as commonplace (and as annoying) as blaring car alarms. (The city-owned 34th Street heliport abuts New York University Medical Center, for example.) Some community activists want to ban tourist flights altogether, and even the flights of news helicopters.

Mayor Giuliani recognizes the problem of helicopter noise pollution. He sought last year to limit the number of flights from 34th Street by banning weekend travel and reducing operating hours, and to direct the choppers along preset routes.

Unfortunately, Federal District Judge Sonia Sotomayor last January stymied the mayor, ruling that only the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) could regulate helicopter operations in the city.

Tuesday's crash underscores why the city is right to appeal this ruling.

EDITORIAL

Danger From the Skies

In this space last week, we discussed the appropriate path to take toward making the skies above the city safer for those who dwell underneath: pressure the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

After the fatal helicopter crash in the East River on April 15 – the same day last week's editorial was published – the message rings truer than ever.

At the risk of adding one more voice to the chorus of denunciations, that chopper could just as easily have crashed into a residential neighborhood. (The population of Community Board 4's district – containing the busy 30th Street heliport on the Hudson River – was found to have a population of 84,431 by the 1990 U.S. Census.) In last week's crash, the chopper's body, through sheer luck, landed in the water, but the tail section flew at high speed into a terminal building. It takes only slight imagination to picture the carnage if those tons of steel came down on a busy West Side street during rush hour.

New York City is truly an engineering marvel, and it's hard to blame tourists who want to catch an aerial view of this wonder of steel, stone and glass. We can't blame the tourists – we supply the helicopters and sell the tickets. We provide the opportunity for operators to profit from this menace above.

Tourism is one of New York City's largest sources of revenue. But is it profitable enough to jeopardize lives? That, perhaps, depends on who you ask.

The city's Helicopter Noise Coalition – which, despite its name, is concerned with safety and health issues, not just noise – is an alliance of activists and officials who are fed up with these profitable but non-essential and potentially dangerous flights. Well prior to last week's tragic incident, the coalition was warning that such was bound to happen eventually – and we actually got off rather lightly. Maybe now critics – and bureaucratic foot-draggers – will be more inclined to admit that the coalition has been right all along.

DAILY NEWS

Saturday, April 26, 1997

2

Copters grounded after river crash

WASHINGTON — A flaw found in the helicopter that crashed into the East River earlier this month prompted the Federal Aviation Administration yesterday to order the European-made choppers grounded until they are inspected.

A business executive was killed in the crash.

"The investigation of the accident revealed that the tail boom — which holds the stabilizing rotor — broke off," the FAA said in a statement. "It was determined the failure was caused by fatigue cracking."

Reuter

HNC p 169

The Metro Section

The New York Times

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 1977

L+ 25

Flaw Cited in Fatal Crash Had Been Found in 3 Other Copters

By MATTHEW L. WALD

WASHINGTON, April 25 — Three helicopters of the type that crashed in Manhattan last week, killing a passenger, had earlier been found to have cracks in their tails, the same flaw blamed in the accident. But the Federal Aviation Administration said it had not learned of those cracks until after last week's crash.

The F.A.A. today ordered the grounding of all 132 helicopters in the United States of that model, the German-made BK-117, so mechanics could check for cracks in the tail. Any helicopters found to have cracks will be

grounded indefinitely, the F.A.A. said, because there is no approved repair procedure.

On April 15, a helicopter owned by Colgate-Palmolive crashed into the East River just after taking off from the 60th Street heliport in Manhattan. The company's chief technology officer, Craig B. Tate, 51, was killed. Another passenger and one of the two pilots were seriously injured. Investigators said the tail broke off.

The F.A.A. said a crack began in a U-shaped rib in the tail and gradually spread "until only the outer skin was carrying the flight load."

Then, the agency said, it spread "until catastrophic overstress occurred."

"This condition, if not corrected, could result in failure of the vertical fin and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter," the agency said.

The helicopter was a BK-117, manufactured by Eurocopter Deutschland, a German company. F.A.A. officials said today that three helicopters of that model had previously had cracks in the tail, though none had resulted in accidents.

The F.A.A. said the earlier cracks had been repaired by the manufacturer, but Timothy Ruddick, a spokesman for Euro-

copter's American office in Grand Prairie, Tex., said his company had not done the repair work. He said the cracks could have been repaired on a case-by-case basis under authorizations by engineers designated by the F.A.A.

Larry M. Kelly, acting manager of the F.A.A.'s rotorcraft directorate, said one question is "how the earlier ones didn't make it into the system." Any such opening problems are supposed to be reported to the F.A.A. and entered into its databases.

Mr. Kelly said the cracks were caused by

Continued on Page 26

HNC p170

The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with We

Friday, May 2, 1997

Page 1

Chopper Furor Leads to Heliport Shutdown

The Mayor is closing the heliport opposite Roosevelt Island. The action comes in the wake of intensified protests over helicopter noise, which followed closely on the heels of the fatal April 15 crash at the heliport when a Colgate-Palmolive chopper lost its tail rotor and sank in the East River.



The Crash

by Debra Mount Cornet

"The silence caused me to stop and look up." That's what first brought Island resident Tom McEvoy's attention to the helicopter crash across the East River at the 60th Street Heliport on April 15. Biking along the river around 5:30 p.m. McEvoy recalled his shock at the sight of the falling craft. "There was a lot of noise, and then it stopped. I heard a huge splash as it hit the water, tilted on its side. In no time, it started to sink."

See Chopper, page 10

HNC p 171

Cont.

Cont.

10 • The Main Street WIRE Friday, May 2, 1997

Chopper from page 1

Losing a rotor blade right after take-off, the BK-117 model helicopter, owned by Colgate-Palmolive, flipped upside down trapping the two passengers under 35 feet of deep black water. Two crew members were able to escape. A short time later, divers rescued the two corporate executives. Craig Tate, 50, of New Canaan, CT, later died while the others were hospitalized.

Rescue unit vehicles and workers lined Main Street and the riverwalk between Rivercross and the Tram. The uncertainty of the crash site initially had required such a big response, and although the units were in constant contact, their services weren't needed.

Six helicopters have crashed in the East River in the last twelve years. Two deaths and a number of injuries occurred in those accidents. The most recent tragedy focused community attention on the controversy surrounding the operation of heliports in the city. The issue brought activists on the helicopter issue from around the city to the Community Board 8 Meeting held April 16 in Good Shepherd Chapel.

Community Board 8

During the public session of that meeting, representatives of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, an inter-borough advocacy group united in a fight against helicopters, Edward Eillen of Brooklyn Heights, a member of the HNC, said "The accident probably was a malfunction and no maintenance schedule exists. We support banning all helicopters from New York."

In fact, the FAA later ordered all copies of the model grounded after discovering cracks in the tail rotors of other BK-117s.

Other members of HNC described a myriad of complaints, including noise, stress, and prevailing

ing safety standards. Joy Field, Executive Director of the group said "They are destroying our quality of life. Other boards and neighborhood associations have joined

strong regulations limiting helicopters over New York City." She assured concerned citizens that together noise and safety hazards could be halted. Donnelle



us in a resolution for banning all helicopters." Although the board did not pass such a resolution at that meeting, Roosevelt Island members did voice their concerns on the issue.

Island Board member Nneka Pope called upon the Island community to join the HNC in its efforts. In a later interview, she said "I oppose all non-emergency flights within the five boroughs of New York. What would be the consequences if the blade that struck the building on the heliport, had instead hit the Tram, or the Queensboro Bridge?" Pope found Island response thus far disappointing and she repeated her request for Islanders to involve themselves.

At the request of *The Wire*, CB8 member Shirley Margolin of Roosevelt Island read a fiery letter from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney dated April 8. In the letter, Maloney recounted concerns she had expressed at a meeting with FAA officials, urging them to act quickly "to issue

Goodwyn of Maloney's office repeated the concerns at the CB8 meeting.

be annoying, she said "Safety is far more critical. We need to ask questions about the legality of the way they operate, and about licenses." Mahattan Borough President Ruth Messinger also weighed in on the issue. "This recent crash is a grim reminder that the city must take steps to end the danger posed by these helicopters."

Also speaking at the meeting, City Councilman Gifford Miller said "I appreciate the Board's concern about the inappropriate site of the 60th Street Heliport." In a later interview, he added, "We are trying to get the helicopters moved and the flight pattern changed so they don't fly over Roosevelt Island." Miller focused more on limiting flights, like tourist flights, and building heliports in low-population areas. The 60th Street site, he explained, could be developed into a park or restaurant, serving the area better.

RRA Common Council Member Frank Farance, a pilot, spoke during the Board Meeting to



Photo: Kurt Warner

Margolin later pointed out the fact that the 60th Street Heliport has only a month-to-month lease. Although agreeing the noise can

"clarify a few misconceptions" about regulation of helicopters. He later compiled a comprehensive packet of information outlining the

problems and his recommendations. Approaching the heliport too low, "joy riding" (particularly by NYPD choppers), performing unsafe maneuvers, and levels of risk and noise, are among the problems he mentions. He encourages residents to contact the FAA with complaints.

The FAA retains complete control of helicopters in New York City, as ruled recently by a Federal judge. The city sought to oversee flight patterns and schedules, but lost. They are appealing the judgment.

Other CB8 Matters

Other Community Board activity in the April 16th meeting included Vincent Maniscalco from Assemblyman Pete Gramis's office, reporting the passage in the Assembly of \$600,000 restored to the island's budget, which awaits Senate confirmation.

Speaking out on rent-stabilization, Nneka Pope said "We can not allow any attack on any housing program in any locale which has a vacancy rate of under 5%."

Councilmember Miller also announced his appointment as Chair of the newly-formed Regional Planning Task Force. (An interview with him on this will appear next issue.)

Maloney Applauds Heliport Closing

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney applauded this week's decision by Mayor Giuliani to close the 60th Street Heliport. Maloney called it "a great start," but called for additional action to insure safety and control noise pollution. "We must not have another deadly helicopter accident," said Maloney.

HNC
P
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Town & Village

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, MAY 22, 1997

Letters to the Editor

No more copter deaths

Closing the 60th Street heliport is a great start in our battle against the city's helicopter problems. But my constituents have been complaining about safety concerns and the noise emanating from the city's other heliports for years.

We must ensure that the helicopters still flying over our streets are safe, which is why Representative Nadler and I [have] met with the FAA in Washington to continue our discussion about regulating helicopter flights over the city and controlling noise pollution.

We must not have another deadly helicopter accident.

Carolyn Maloney
Congresswoman

HWC p 173

Marine Helicopter Crashes

HUTCHINS, Tex., May 23 (AP) — A Marine helicopter crashed and burst into flames near a school here, and the police said there were no survivors.

It was not immediately clear how many people were on board. A Marine spokesman said the helicopter was a Cobra AH-1, which seats two.

The helicopter crashed just before 5 P.M. in a wooded area near Wilmer-Hutchins High School here in this suburb about 10 miles southeast of downtown Dallas.

A woman who saw the crash, Velva Washburn, said the helicopter started making strange noises before it went down.

"The blades continued to turn but there was a whooping sound," Ms. Washburn said. "And that was all. There was a pop and then it went down."

HNC p174

Eight Injured as Helicopter Hits Building

Witness Says Pilot Came In Too Fast, but City Blames the Wind

By DAVID RHODE

As the Liberty tours helicopter made its final approach over the icy waters of the Hudson at twilight yesterday, Murray Williamson, a tourist from New Zealand, thought to himself that the pilot was coming in too fast. Seconds later, the helicopter's rotor shredded the side of the small building Mr. Williamson was standing in, eight people received minor injuries, and another black mark had been inflicted on the city's embattled helicopter industry.

The helicopter, which carried eight people and is operated by Liberty Helicopters, skidded into the one-story building at the West 30th Street heliport, at 4:26 P.M. yesterday after being hit by a strong gust of wind, according to Jerome M. Hauer, director of the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management.

The helicopter's main rotor tore into the side of the building, which has a wooden exterior, where Mr. Williamson and dozens of tourists were waiting for a \$150-a-seat aerial tour of the city. Mr. Hauer said officials from the Federal Aviation Administration were investigating the cause of the crash.

But Mr. Williamson, who said he had flown on helicopters in his native

New Zealand, contended that the pilot approached the landing site at too high a speed. "He was just coming in too fast," Mr. Williamson said. "It went straight into the building."

The crash, which occurred 40 feet from the Hudson River, proved to be more frightening than lethal. Of the eight people who were injured, the pilot, who suffered a minor injury to his hand, a female passenger, who received a minor injury, and a Liberty employee in the building, who had an asthma attack, were taken to St. Vincent's Hospital for treatment. The five others who were slightly injured refused medical treatment.

But images of shaken tourists and Federal investigators combing over a crumpled helicopter were another blow to an industry already under attack. In April 1997, an executive was killed and three other people were injured when their helicopter crashed in the East River shortly after lifting off from the 60th Street heliport. And in August, city officials moved to close the East 34th Street Heliport after years of complaints from neighborhood groups that helicopter tours were too noisy and too dangerous.

Mr. Williamson, who arrived in New York with his wife, son and

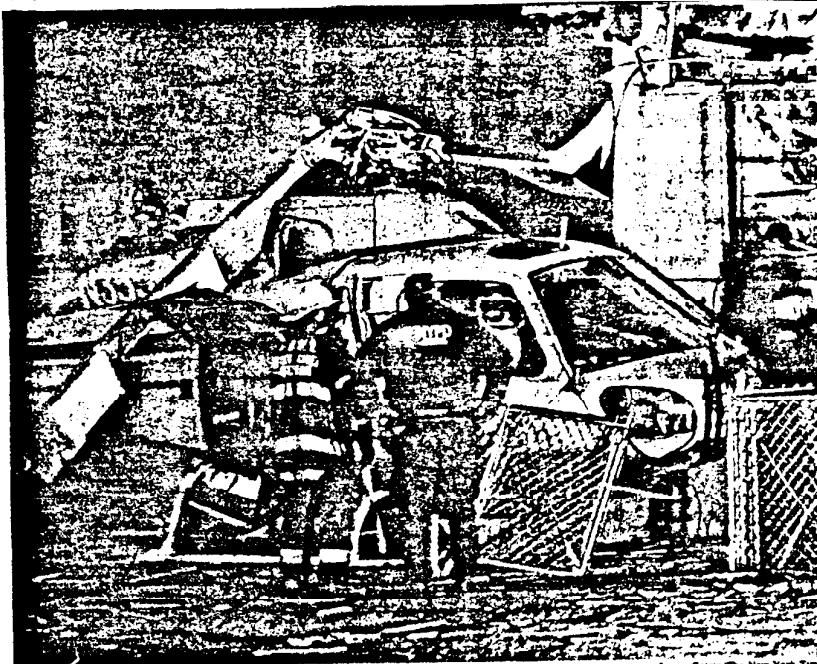
daughter on Tuesday, said the sound of the rotor tearing into the building was like a small explosion. "We were just getting ready to get on it," he said, referring to the helicopter that crashed. "We were the next in line."

Passengers in the one-story building, many of whom were foreign tourists, panicked. Andrew Marage, one of the first police officers to arrive, said mayhem greeted him. "It was chaos in the building," he said. "The helicopter's rotor was lodged into the side of it."

Police officers and firefighters, who feared that the helicopter's fuel might ignite, quickly evacuated passengers from the helicopter and cleared the area.

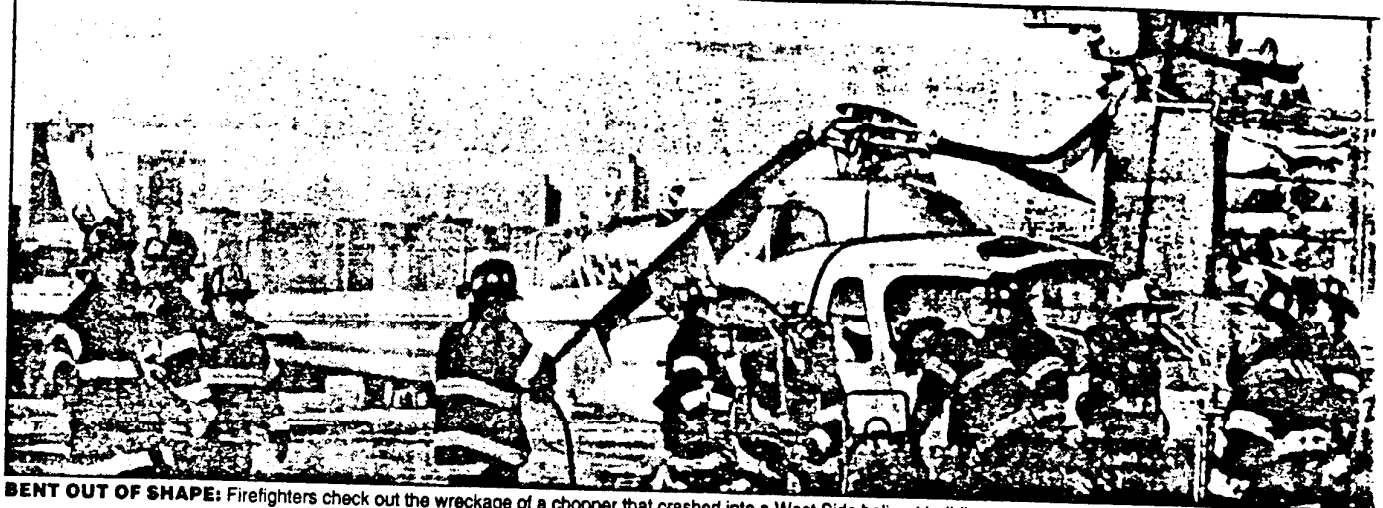
Men who answered several telephone calls to Liberty last night would not identify themselves. "We are looking into the incident," one man said. "We are very thankful no one was seriously injured." A recording identified the company as Liberty Helicopters, which offers charter and tour flights.

Company officials and the police did not identify the pilot last night. City officials said they did not know how much experience the pilot had or whether he had been involved in any previous crashes.



The rotors of a helicopter sliced into a building at the West 30th Street heliport yesterday afternoon as dozens of tourists waited to take an aerial tour of the city. Eight people received minor injuries.

HNC P 175



BENT OUT OF SHAPE: Firefighters check out the wreckage of a chopper that crashed into a West Side heliport building yesterday.

NY Post: Spencer A. Burnett

West Side chopper crash hurts 3

Tourists flee in terror as craft hits building

Reported by Linda Massarella, Teresa Merrigan, Murray Weiss and Bill Sanderson. Written by Tracy Connor.

Wicked winds slammed a tourist helicopter into a small West Side building last night — but miraculously, only three people suffered minor injuries in the dramatic crash.

Two dozen terrified people waiting on the ground for the chopper ran for their lives after the aircraft went out of control at the heliport at 30th Street and 12th Avenue.

"I heard an explosion which sounded like a small bomb," said NYPD highway officer David Williams, who was half a block away when the helicopter's rotor sliced into the hut like building.

"I looked over and saw pieces of the building flying," said the 12-year veteran, who rushed into the building. "I saw wood flying all over the place and smoke and dust."

The AS-65 Twin Star was about 20 feet from the landing pad when havoc erupted, witnesses said.

"A big wind all of a sudden came and blew it off course," said Italian

tourist Lamorne Venturini, who was waiting for another sightseeing flight. "It was coming at us and we all ducked for cover."

"Five minutes earlier and we would have been on that flight. It was a miracle they weren't hurt."

British tourist Jason Gattiker said he thought the helicopter was coming in too fast for a proper landing.

"We saw it come in quickly, try to

backtrack and strike the deck," he said. "It went up on its nose, the rotors hit the hut and took the corner of the hut off. It was a very loud bang."

Steven Rosen of London was also waiting in a nearby hut, looking out the window when the mishap occurred. Moments later, he spotted the passengers, shaken up but mostly unharmed.

"Everybody seemed OK, but when they were getting out, they did look very shocked. Everybody was hugging one another and crying," he said.

The five passengers were banged up but refused medical treatment, police said.

The pilot and two women — one in the building and another on the ground — suffered minor injuries and were taken to St. Vincent's Hospital.

The pilot had a cut finger and one of the women had a cut forehead, officials said.

The names of the injured were not immediately released.

"The passengers weren't panicking," Williams said. "They were very upset and scared, but the mood was pretty calm."

NYPD Assistant Deputy Chief Henry Cronin blamed the mishap on the wind, but said the Federal Aviation Administration would ultimately determine the cause.

Jerry Hauer, director of the mayor's Office of Emergency Management, said Liberty Helicopter operated the sightseeing chopper.

The company, one of the city's main tourist-flight helicopter operators, refused to comment.

Liberty, which charges sightseers \$150 for a 15-minute flight, has come under fire from a group called the Helicopter Noise Coalition, which wants to ban all tourist flights over the city.

Coalition President Joyce Held noted yesterday's mishap was the second chopper crash this year.

"Do we want this in our city?" she said. "We say that the volume of helicopter traffic with this kind of population density is just an accident waiting to happen."



CLOSE CALL: Rescue workers carry one of the injured passengers to an ambulance.

NY Post: Jennifer Westwood

HISTORY OF TRAGEDY

Helicopter mishaps have plagued the metropolitan area for years.

On April 15 of this year, a corporate chopper spun out of control and crashed into the East River, killing Colgate-Palmolive executive Craig Tate. Three others were injured.

One of the most dramatic accidents claimed the life of WNBC Radio reporter Jane Dornacker, whose chopper plunged into the Hudson while she was doing a live traffic report on Oct. 22, 1996. "Hit the water! Hit the water! Hit the water!" listeners heard her pleading with the pilot as the chopper crashed.

Donald Trump cheated death when he skipped a flight on Oct. 10, 1989. But three top Trump Organization execs and two pilots died when the flight crashed.

Other local incidents include:

■ Aug. 31, 1993: A co-pilot died when a Coast Guard chopper crashed at the entrance to New York Harbor.

■ Feb. 10, 1990: Five people were rescued when a tourist helicopter went down in the East River near the 34th Street Heliport. One victim, a 13-year-old boy, later died.

■ May 1, 1988: A Japanese sightseer died when a tourist chopper plunged into the East River near the 84th Street Heliport.

■ April 18, 1979: Three people died and 15 were injured when a chopper crashed at Newark Airport.

■ May 16, 1977: Five people were killed when a chopper tipped over on the roof of the then-Pan Am (now MetLife) Building.

Rita Dellinger

New York Post

Jan. 1, 1998

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HNC p 176

NEW YEAR'S MIRACLE

8 escape death as chopper crashes into
W. Side terminal SEE STORY ON PAGE 14



DAILY NEWS

Jan. 1,
1998

50¢

http://www.msn.com/newyork.com

NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

Thursday, January 1, 1998



RESCUE TEAM swarms over W. 30th St. heliport after chopper struck passenger terminal yesterday, injuring three people.

MICHAEL GOODMAN

Helicopter hits terminal

By K.C. BAKER
and HELEN KENNEDY
Daily News Staff Writers

A strong gust of wind sent a tourist helicopter smashing into the terminal building at the W. 30th St. heliport yesterday, but only three people were hurt and the five passengers escaped injury.

The pilot of the chopper and two people in the terminal building — a female dispatcher and a maintenance man — were taken to St. Vincent's Medical Center with minor cuts and bruises, officials said.

The five passengers aboard the aircraft were shaken but unhurt — as were three dozen tourists packed into an adjacent building who watched in horror as the helicopter slammed into the terminal.

A chopper rotor blade cut

Five passengers spared injury

into the wooden building at 30th St. and 12th Ave. Nearby, foreign visitors waited to sail the skies over New York aboard a Liberty Helicopter Tours chopper.

Officer David Williams, 38, a motorcycle cop who was driving by, said the noise of the crash "sounded like a small bomb. I heard the explosion, and I saw pieces of the building flying across 34th St."

Londoner Steven Rosen, 33, was waiting on line when he looked out the window at 4:20 p.m. and saw the chopper coming in for a landing.

"It looked as if a gust of wind picked it up and caught it and slid it straight into the side of the building," he said. "There

was a big bang and smoke — but no flames. People inside the waiting room were gasping with shock. Everyone tried to get out just in case there was an explosion."

"The people who got out of the helicopter looked shocked. Some of them were hugging each other," Rosen said.

Eva Gaudibert, 23, a tourist from New Caledonia, was panicked.

"We were just sitting there and all of a sudden the helicopter's blades cut into the room. It was very loud. I could see the blades, there was wood flying," Gaudibert said. "We just ran, ran, ran."

Police Officer Paul Briscoe

was among the first cops to arrive.

"I saw wood flying. It chopped up half the building. When I ran inside, there was wood still floating around," he said.

Briscoe helped one of the shaken passengers off the wrecked chopper.

"The guy said he was glad the helicopter didn't fall in the water," he said.

The chopper was an American Eurocopter, considered one of the most reliable models. It was impounded yesterday, awaiting examination by Federal Aviation Administration investigators.

Some witnesses said the chopper appeared to be land-

ing too quickly in the 20-knot winds that gusted to 30 knots.

"I saw them flying in way too fast. Then the helicopter just came down and went right into the building," said Murray Williamson, a tourist from New Zealand who had been waiting to take an airborne tour.

Most waiting tourists canceled their \$72-for-12-minute flights — but there was loud grumbling because Liberty Tours refused to provide immediate refunds.

"We're not going on now because I'm scared. I was scared to get on one of these anyway," said JoAnna Robson, 38, of Birmingham, England.

"Now this place won't give my money back."

With Michele McPhee,
Alice McQuillan
and Bill Hutchinson

HNC p 177

3-23-98

Subj: Four Die in Calif. Helicopter Crash
Date: 98-03-23 19:09:50 EST
From: AOL News
BCC: GayleM EdE

Four Die in Calif. Helicopter Crash

.c The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) - An emergency helicopter with a 12-year-old accident victim on board crashed Monday, killing the girl and three firefighters.

"Tragedy has hit us again," fire Capt. Steve Ruda said, recalling the death last week of a fire captain who was trapped and killed while fighting a fire. Until then it had been 14 years since the department had an on-duty fatality, Ruda said.

The pilot and a crew member survived the crash of the Fire Department air ambulance, although they were in serious condition.

Witnesses said the helicopter's engine sputtered and cut out before the craft went down in the Los Feliz area northwest of downtown Los Angeles, narrowly missing homes.

The pilot appeared to steer the Bell 205 Huey-type aircraft to avoid the homes and trees, said Davis Parsons, a deputy fire chief.

Investigators said the helicopter was coming from the scene of a car wreck where 10 minutes beforehand it had picked up the injured girl for transport to a hospital. The cause of the crash was unknown.

Janet LaPietra, who lives a block away, said, "It felt like an earthquake."

Neighbor Beth Jacobs said the neighborhood was fortunate.

"We feel very lucky he landed in a benign spot," she said. "It was like a scene from Universal studios."

AP NY 03-23-98 1907EST

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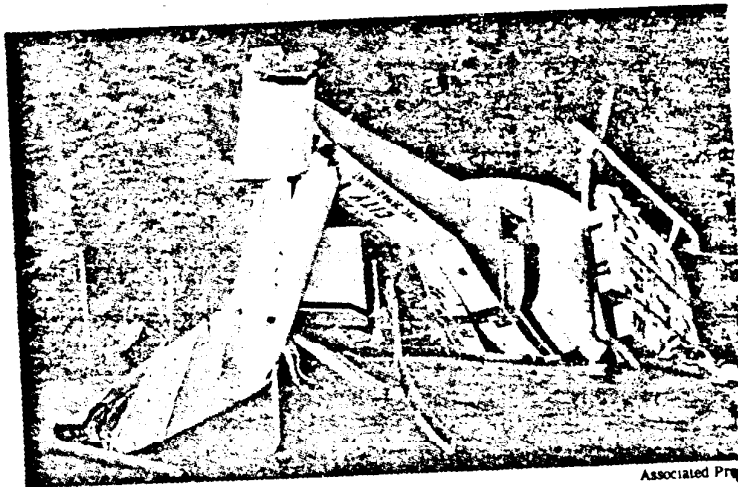
The New York Times

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NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 1998

\$1 beyond the greater New York area

National News Briefs



Associated Press

An ambulance helicopter transporting an injured girl crashed yesterday in Los Angeles, killing the girl and three other people.

Girl Injured in Wreck Dies in Helicopter Crash

LOS ANGELES, March 23 (Reuters) — A 10-year-old girl injured in a traffic accident died today when the ambulance helicopter taking her to a hospital crashed in a wooded area in Los Angeles. Three others on board also died.

A spokesman for the Los Angeles Fire Department, Davis Parsons, said the pilot and another man on board the Bell 205 helicopter survived the crash and were hospitalized in serious condition with head injuries and fractures.

Mr. Parsons declined to speculate on the cause of the crash in which the pilot managed to maneuver the Fire Department helicopter away from houses to woodland near Griffith Park in the heart of the city. There were no reports of injuries on the ground.

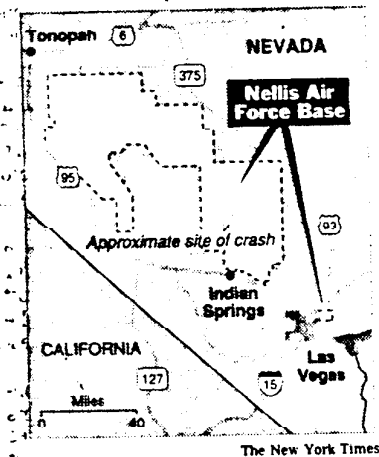
HNC
P179

National Report

The New York Times

L+ A7

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1998



The helicopters that crashed were based at Nellis Air Force Base.

12 Airmen Die As Two Copters Crash in Dark While Training

By STEVEN LEE MYERS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4 — Two Air Force helicopters crashed early today on a nighttime training mission over a remote mountainous area in Nevada, killing all 12 crew members on both helicopters.

Officials said it was the Air Force's deadliest accident since September 1995, when 24 crew members died in the crash of a surveillance plane moments after taking off from Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska.

Today, the two helicopters, each with six crew members, crashed about 1 A.M. while flying together 70 miles north of Nellis Air Force Base, outside Las Vegas, Nev. Two helicopters apparently collided, but officials at Nellis and in Washington said they would not know for certain until the Air Force completed an investigation.

The helicopters, HH-60 Pave Hawks, which cost more than \$10 million each, were made by Sikorsky Aircraft, a subsidiary of the United Technologies Corporation.

The two HH-60 Pave Hawks were designed for search-and-rescue missions and were assigned to the 66th Rescue Squadron at Nellis. The squadron had recently returned from duty in the Persian Gulf and Turkey. The helicopters were taking part in a routine nighttime exercise inside the 5,000-square-mile training range north of Las Vegas, the Air Force's largest.

They crashed in a mountainous area about 25 miles north of Indian Springs, Nev., that is so rocky and remote that it took about four hours for rescue crews from the base, as well as the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Energy, to discover the wreckage and evacuate the crew members' bodies.

It was the first crash of an Air Force Pave Hawk helicopter since 1995, when one from Osan Air Base in South Korea crashed, killing five people. The Pave Hawk has been in operation since 1982.

HNC p 180

News chopper crashes

Channel 4 pilot, reporter survive river plunge



WRECKAGE of TV news helicopter rests in Passaic River where it crashed on way to a story last night.

By DON SINGLETON and LEO STANDORA
Daily News Staff Writers

Channel 4's high-tech news helicopter lost power and crashed into the murky Passaic River near Newark yesterday, forcing the pilot and a cameraman to swim for their lives.

Pilot Terry Hawes, 39, and Kai Simonson, 28, both of New Jersey, crawled out of the copter and swam about a block to shore, where waiting cops rushed them to University Hospital in Newark.

Doctors said both men — who were in stable condition with cuts, bumps and bruises — would be held overnight for observation.

"They're safe — thankfully," said WNBC spokesman Terry Doll. Doll thanked Channel 7 for its help, saying the rival station, whose own chopper was in the air nearby, called for help as soon as it realized Chopper 4 had crashed.

Hawes and Simonson, both employees of Aerial Films, which leases the chopper to Channel 4, were the only people aboard the \$3.8 million craft.

Chopper 4 went down about 5:40 p.m. while headed to Newark to cover a blackout, authorities said.

Simonson was quoted as saying, "We were making a turn, and the next thing we knew, we were in the water."

On Channel 4's 11 p.m. newscast, Li-Hua Chang reported that Simonson was married in September and that his first call after he was ashore was to his wife to tell her he was safe.

Ken Sanborn, president of Aerial Films, said Hawes broadcast several Maydays and reported one engine out.

Video of the crash showed the craft banking right and trailing sparks as it dropped sideways into the river.

A large section of the fuselage and tail rotor remained above the shallow water a short distance from the piers along the shore.

Police Officer Mark McCaffrey was on bike patrol nearby when he saw the chopper wobbling and sparking.

"It seems the pilot was trying to keep it over the river" to avoid crashing in a shopping center parking lot, he said.

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Richard Huff

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Sanborn said the chopper appeared to be at about 500 feet when it started dropping.

The accident was under investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration.

"It's too early to tell for sure, but it could have been a transmission problem or something," Sanborn said.

Last night's crash recalled the death of WNBC radio reporter Jane Dornacker, who was killed when her traffic chopper slammed into the Hudson River during a live news report Oct. 22, 1986. She screamed, "Hit the water" as the copter went down.

Channel 4 anchor Dean Shepard was on the air when he learned of last night's crash, and his face froze in a blank stare. "It's awful. Your heart immediately sinks," he said.

With Bill Egbert and Austin Fenner

Flying high

Chopper 4 was billed as the "most sophisticated aerial news-gathering machine in the world."

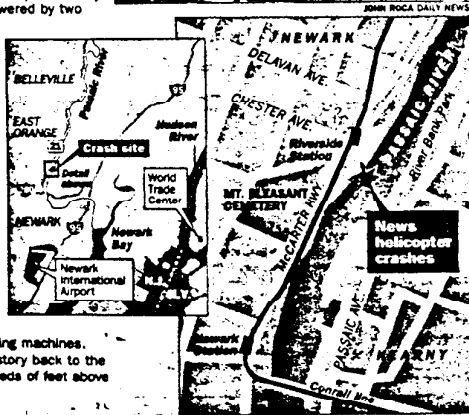
DEBUT: 1990

COST: \$3.8 million. It costs another \$1 million a year to keep it in the air.

MODEL: EC135 helicopter built by Eurocopter. It's powered by two 750-horsepower Pratt & Whitney engines.

CAPABILITIES: It can fly up to 172 mph and climb 1,750 feet per minute. It can stay in the air about 5½ hours and fly about 400 miles before refueling.

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Mechanical woes eyed

By JAMES RUTENBERG
Daily News Staff Writer

Investigators looking into last night's downing of Chopper 4 will examine everything from an engine failure to possible trouble with the aircraft's tail rotor, experts said.

Pilot Terry Hawes radioed shortly before hitting the water that one of his engines went out.

Twin-engine helicopters like the EC135 are designed on a fail-safe system — so if

one engine goes out, the other can pick up the slack.

"It's very rare that two power plants fail," said Vincent Driscoll, chairman of the airplanes department at Queens College of Aeronautics.

Driscoll said a potential trouble spot is the helicopter's gear shaft or transmission, which enables the pilot to control the aircraft.

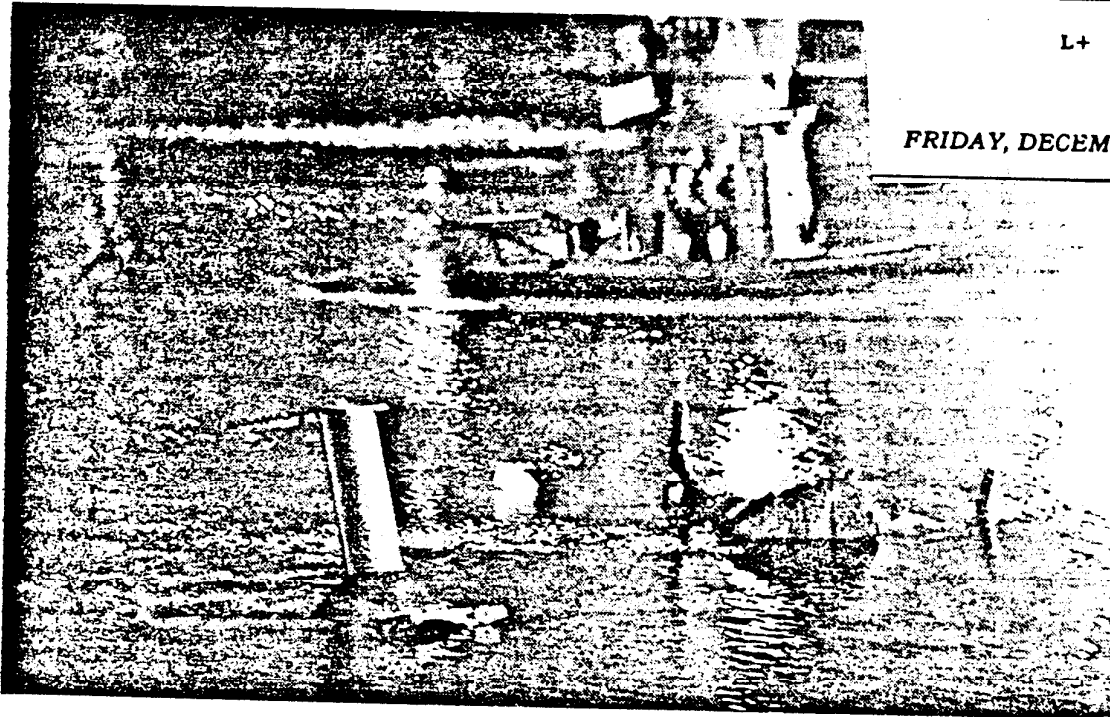
Investigators also will look at the aircraft's tail rotor, which stabilizes the chopper.

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The Metro Section

The New York Times



L+

B1

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1998

No one was seriously injured last night when a WNBC-TV helicopter crashed into the Passaic River.

James Estrin/The New York Times

News Helicopter Crashes in River Near Newark

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN

A WNBC-TV news helicopter carrying a pilot and a reporter to cover a power failure in downtown Newark went down in the shallow, murky Passaic River on Newark's north side last night, but the occupants were not seriously injured and swam to safety.

The cause of the crash was not immediately determined, but the owner of the helicopter said the pilot had radioed a Mayday signal after detecting trouble and had made what he called an emergency landing in the river.

Witnesses told of popping noises and flames in the darkness as the helicopter, a seven-seater designated Chopper 4 and bearing the Channel 4 and NBC peacock logos, went into the river about two miles north of downtown Newark at 5:40 P.M., the police

reported.

While the craft fell on its side, it was only partly submerged and 30 to 40 feet from the west bank of the river, a winding waterway separating Newark and Kearney. The pilot, Terry Hawes, 38, of Pennsauken, N.J., and the reporter, Kai Simonson, 28, of Morris Plains, managed to climb out and swim to shore.

Helped over a three-foot retaining wall by workers from a cement plant, they were taken to an office and then by ambulance to University Hospital in Newark, where they were treated for cuts, bruises and hypothermia and listed in stable condition, according to a hospital spokesman, Rogers Ramsey.

"Thank God they're safe," said Terry Doll, a WNBC-TV spokeswoman.

Ken Sanborn, president of Aerial

Films, of Morristown, the owner of the helicopter and the employer of its crews, said the craft was a twin-engine German-made EC135 Eurocopter that flies out of Caldwell, N.J. and was leased to WNBC-TV. It was put into service last March.

The \$3.8 million chopper is a "state of the art" craft, Mr. Sanborn said, with twin engines, either one of which could keep the craft aloft. He declined to speculate on the cause of the crash, which will be investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board. But because the simultaneous failure of two engines seemed unlikely, there might have been a transmission or propeller problem.

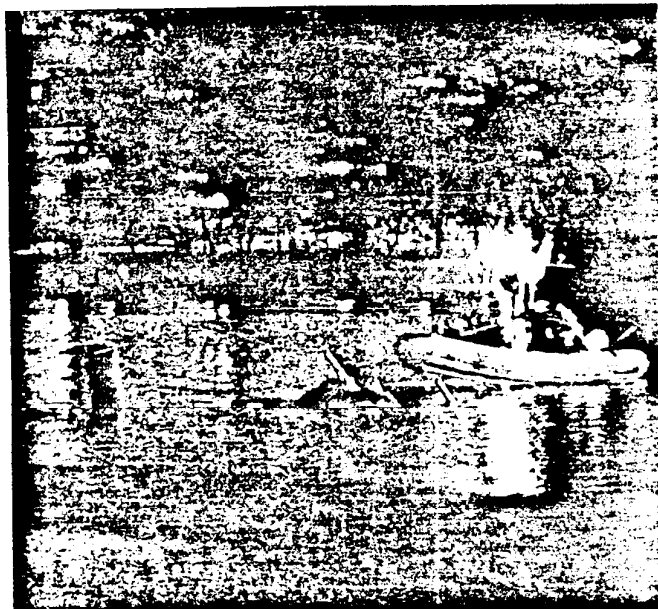
Mr. Sanborn said the pilot had 5,000 hours of flying time, and that the helicopter had daily checks and regular maintenance and had not experienced previous problems.

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News chopper crashes

Channel 4 pilot, reporter survive river plunge



WRECKAGE of TV news helicopter rests in Passaic River where it crashed on way to a story last night.

By DON SINGLETON and LEO STANDORA

Daily News Staff Writers

Channel 4's high-tech news helicopter lost power and crashed into the murky Passaic River near Newark yesterday, forcing the pilot and a cameraman to swim for their lives.

Pilot Terry Hawes, 39, and Kai Simonson, 28, both of New Jersey, crawled out of the copter and swam about a block to shore, where waiting cops rushed them to University Hospital in Newark.

Doctors said both men — who were in stable condition with cuts, bumps and bruises — would be held overnight for observation.

"They're safe — thankfully," said WNBC spokesman Terry Doll. Doll thanked Channel 7 for its help, saying the rival station, whose own chopper was in the air nearby, called for help as soon as it realized Chopper4 had crashed.

Hawes and Simonson, both employees of Aerial Films, which leases the chopper to Channel 4, were the only people aboard the \$3.8 million craft.

Chopper4 went down about 5:40 p.m. while headed to Newark to cover a blackout, authorities said.

Simonson was quoted as saying, "We were making a turn, and the next thing we knew, we were in the water."

On Channel 4's 11 p.m. newscast, Ti-Hua Chang reported that Simonson was married in September and that his first call after he was ashore was to his wife to tell her he was safe.

Ken Sanborn, president of Aerial Films, said Hawes broadcast several Maydays and reported one engine out.

Video of the crash showed the craft banking right and trailing sparks as it dropped sideways into the river.

A large section of the fuselage and tail rotor remained above the shallow water, a short distance from the piers along the shore.

Police Officer Mark McCaffrey was on bike patrol nearby when he saw the chopper wobbling and sparking.

"It seems the pilot was trying to keep it over the river" to avoid crashing in a shopping center parking lot, he said.

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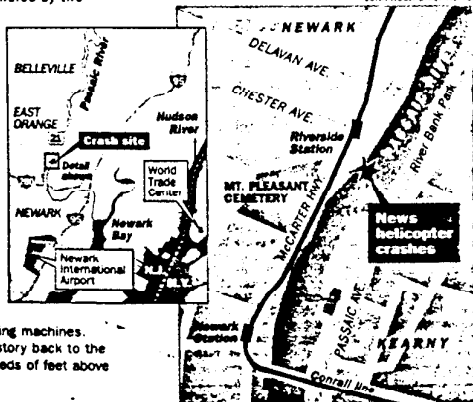
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JOHN BOGA DAILY NEWS



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DAILY NEWS • Friday, December 4, 1998

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P
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The Metro Section

The New York Times

B1

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1998

Faulty Repair Seen in '97 Helicopter Crash

By MATTHEW L. WALD

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15 — A corporate helicopter that snapped apart at the tail just after takeoff in April 1997, crashing into the East River and killing a passenger, had been improperly repaired with a part that is vulnerable to metal fatigue, members of the National Transportation Safety Board said today.

The part, a type of hollow rivet, has also probably been used in other aircraft in places where it might fail, officials said. One safety board member said that the Federal Aviation Administration may eventually need to require that aircraft brought in for maintenance be inspected for hollow rivets installed in inappropriate places.

"This problem is probably more widespread than we can imagine," said the board member, John Goglia, a former aircraft mechanic who said he himself had installed many such hollow rivets as substitutes for solid ones.

The fasteners, called blind rivets, resemble the heavy-duty picture hooks sold at hardware stores that can be pushed through a small hole, expanded behind the wall and pulled snug without the installer's having access to the other side. Blind rivets can hasten aircraft repairs because they do not require mechanics to remove internal parts to get access to the inside.

Mechanics at the Colgate-Palmolive Company, the owner of the helicopter that crashed in New York, installed the blind rivets in December 1992 when they replaced a part of the tail that had cracked. When the tail later cracked again, leading to the 1997 crash, the rivets were partly to blame, investigators say.

A Federal Aviation Administration advisory document, which was cited by safety board members meeting today to discuss their staff's findings in the East River

crash, says blind rivets can be used with the approval of the aircraft or rivet manufacturer. But Les Dorr Jr., an F.A.A. spokesman, said that the wording of the document "could be confusing" and that the aviation administration did not mean for mechanics to rely solely on the rivet manufacturer's advice.

At the safety board's meeting, Mr. Goglia displayed a technical document from Textron Inc., the manufacturer of the rivets used on the Colgate-Palmolive helicopter, saying that blind rivets could be used to replace solid rivets. But other Textron documents noted that while blind rivets are as strong as solid ones in resisting shearing or stretching, they are less able to withstand

had developed such cracks.

Colgate-Palmolive had continued to inspect at 1,200-hour intervals even after Eurocopter said 3,600 hours was safe. But its mechanics did not detect the new crack, possibly because it developed quickly.

At Eurocopter's American headquarters, in Grand Prairie, Tex., the director of technical support, Tim Ruddick, said that the company did not know about the cracks when it lengthened the inspection interval. Since the crash, Eurocopter has ordered inspections every 300 hours, as well as the addition of several pieces of reinforcing metal.

The Colgate-Palmolive crash may also have been worse because of relatively lax Federal rules for corporate flights, according to the board staff. For example, the pilots were not required to take recurrent emergency training, and the captain, Edward Thurn, had had none for three and a half years, investigators said.

But board members said they were not sure that more recent training would have made the captain react more quickly. And there are no simulators for BK-117's, limiting the amount of emergency training that crew members can do.

In contrast to the rules for commercial flights, Federal regulations for corporate flights do not require the crew to tell passengers where life vests and emergency exits are, and the Colgate-Palmolive crew apparently did not do so, said Robert Hancock, the board's investigator in charge of the case. That may be one reason the two passengers were unable to escape the helicopter when it crashed into the East River after taking off from the East 60th Street heliport, investigators said.

The pilots managed to get out of the submerged, upside-down helicopter; the two passengers were brought up by police divers after 15 minutes. One could not be revived.

Air safety experts study a rivet's role in a fatal accident.

repeated bending, which is exactly the stress they were subject to on the helicopter's tail.

The safety board postponed formal conclusions but did find a number of other safety problems in examining the New York crash. One is that even as more and more of the helicopters, BK-117's manufactured by the German company Eurocopter, were developing cracks in the same spot as the one in the New York case, Eurocopter was telling customers that it was safe to reduce inspections, the board's staff said.

Initially, the manufacturer recommended inspections every 1,200 hours of flight, then every 2,400 and finally every 3,600. But in inspections ordered after the crash, investigators discovered that nine BK-117's

flnc
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National News Briefs

2 Are Killed in Alabama In Helicopter Crash

HELENA, Ala., Nov. 25 (AP) — A helicopter crashed and burned on Wednesday in a wooded area about 15 miles south of Birmingham, killing the pilot and the sole passenger.

The privately owned helicopter, a Hughes 500, crashed about 7:35 p.m. near Helena, the police said. The names of the victims were withheld pending notification of relatives.

Wilene Minshew said she was inside her house when she heard the helicopter and then an explosion.

"It was making a strange sound, like someone was dragging a chain across gravel, but louder," Ms. Minshew said. "The first thing I saw was the sky all lit up."

HWC p185

Statement presented on behalf of NYU Medical Center, its patients, visitors and employees. Presented to the Helicopter Oversight Hearing held by the City Council Committees on Transportation and the Environment – May 6, 1998

NYU Medical Center is the East 34th Street Heliport's nearest neighbor – it's really but a stone's throw away.

On a daily basis Medical Center employees complain about noxious fumes from the heliport. A few go home sick, some must vacate their work space for stretches of time, and others contemplate leaving their jobs because they are concerned that the fumes are harming their health.

Perhaps more worrisome are the complaints from patients. In a number of cases patients in Tisch Hospital couldn't get the rest they needed to recuperate because of noise from helicopters taking off and landing. In 1992 the Medical Center retained an independent consultant who measured the noise in patient rooms that could be specifically attributed to helicopters. When helicopters were taking off and landing the levels consistently exceeded those that are allowed under the City's Noise Control Code. Although the Medical Center understands the difficulty involved in enforcing the concept of "Quiet Hospital Zone" in a city like New York, we believe that allowing helicopters to fly past patient windows is a bit excessive.

In addition to noise, patients complain about the air pollution. Our patients in the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitative Medicine can't use the outdoor gardens, developed to facilitate their rehabilitation, because the pollution from the heliport is so intense. Patients have to breathe helicopter fumes when they go for therapy in the Greenhouse. And the pollution is present, on a regular basis, in the Children's Rehabilitative Playground. The consultant we retained in 1992 was able to document, through air sampling and computer modeling, that the East 34th Street Heliport is the primary source of this pollution.

For close to 15 years the Medical Center has engaged in a dialogue and lodged complaints with numerous agencies including the Mayor's Office, the Borough President's Office, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Health, the Economic Development Corporation, the City Planning Commission and the Department of Ports and Trades. Over the past few years we have testified at numerous hearings – and presented indisputable documentation that the 34th Street heliport is violating laws designed to protect our patients and our staff.

The present situation is untenable. We urge the city to take the necessary steps to protect our patients, visitors and employees, and prevent the heliport from continuing to operate in flagrant violation of New York City's Noise and Air Pollution Control Codes.

Contact: Alan Yood or Jean Goldberg
NYU Medical Center, Environmental Services Department
(212) 263-5159

HWC p 186

P
Air Pollution
Sample
Letters

Manhattan
E 30's

May 6, 1998

The City Council
Transportation and Environmental Protection Committees

Try to imagine a very loud engine roar, vibrating in your ears along with a thick choking stench of jet fuel exhaust entering your apartment and neighborhood every morning, dinner hour and play time with your kids.

My son Max, who is seven now, has been experiencing runny eyes and nose while playing with his friends during the take off and landing hours. He is not alone. I experience it also and so do many of my neighbors. We live in Kips Bay Towers on East 30th Street. The vibrations and noise from the helicopter engines and their constant exhaust fumes are a tremendous health hazard.

There are public schools, churches and major hospital, a growing busy community and thousands of people all right next to this cancer of an air field.

What is the problem in chasing these hazards out of this very busy area? Do I, my family, my neighbors and all New Yorkers have to endure this havoc? Do we have to live our lives with these air fields in the middle of our very populated communities? It makes no sense to me. What are you waiting for? A major disaster to prove all this? We have had many warnings and deaths in the recent past. Let's get rid of these dangerous heliports in our midst. They are causing a great deal of disruption in our daily lives. They are choking us. What are you waiting for?

Concerned Parent
Voter
Tax Payer
New Yorker

HVC P-187

April 4, 1998

Governor George Pataki
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

Re: State-owned heliport at West 30th Street, New York City

Dear Honorable George Pataki:

For several years now I have been a member of the Borough President Task Force in New York City seeking to address the growing threat of abusive helicopters which not only violate our rights for safety and peace and quiet in our homes are a true health menace.

Helicopters' intrusive noise and fumes are a contributing cause of the burgeoning asthma epidemic in New York City that is taking the lives of its children, senior citizens, and shortening the lives of those of us who are in between.

Helicopters as well as jet/prop/commuter plane flyovers and hovering cause myriad other problems as well; they invoke the fight or flight response regardless of whether we try to ignore the menace, our body responds. Some of the physical damage caused. Higher blood pressure, higher cholesterol, heart problems, gastro-intestinal problems, lack of concentration (how can you concentrate when you have a helicopter hovering over you which feels like it is already in your apartment?).....

We need your assistance now. New York residents do not deserve to be subjected to this abuse. Stand with us and close the New York skies and reserve same only for police, fire and medivac activity.

The abuse the residents of this city suffer at the hands of helicopter pilots is unparalleled in this country; even the national park critters have more rights than us. There is something very, very wrong with that picture.

Please help us, Governor. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

H/MC p 188

Q.
National
Security
Sample
Letter

February 18, 1996

Ms. Judy McClain, Chair
Helicopter Task Force
Manhattan Borough President's Office
New York, New York

Re: Helicopters and National Security in New York City

Dear Ms. McClain:

I recently spoke with four Coast Guard Officers including two current officers and a retired career helicopter pilot and flight teacher and a retired admiral and commandant. To each officer I described our situation where hundreds of tour and corporate helicopters fly daily on our rivers and over land including over the U.N. and the World Trade Center.

My question to each officer was "Because of the flight path and the huge volume of tour and other flights and the resulting confusion in the air, wouldn't it be easy for a terrorist helicopter to slip in under 1200 feet escaping radar detection and drop a charge on the U.N., World Trade Center or other strategic building?"

All four men answered emphatically with their personal opinions.

"Yes, your concerns are well founded. It's a security risk."

"You're right. There's a possibility of a terrorist attack."

"Your analysis is correct."

"Yes. It should be a no fly zone like Washington."

The officers also told me that the Coast Guard had no jurisdiction to act in this matter and recommended that we ask the F.A.A.

Confirming our belief that these flights over sensitive areas pose a security hazard, this Sunday February 16, we saw a Sikorsky helicopter fly directly over the Secretariat building at 1:05 P.M. Asked about this, the policeman stationed on the street told us "Yes. It happens frequently." Even without the threat of a terrorist attack all it would take is a gust of wind or a broken crank shaft or propeller to cause a giant crash that would create an international incident.

HNC 189

The letters of agreement attempt to regulate tour paths but say nothing about corporate flights and they still neglect to mention anything about security problems which we have established as being a significant factor.

We're asking the F.A.A. to make our rivers and metropolitan New York a no fly zone.

Yours truly,

k City

11 Nov 190

R.

Property
Value
Sample
Letter

April 16th, 1997.

021

To whom it may concern:

I currently am in the process of purchasing an apartment in a co-op on East 72nd Street, east of First Avenue. The apartment for which I have just entered into contract with the seller, is located on the eighteenth floor and faces east.

I currently live on East 65th Street, also east of First Avenue. Although my apartment is located on a much lower floor, on a regular basis I am disturbed by the clutter of helicopters overhead. The noise level of the helicopters is excessive and overrides all other noise pollution one associates with city living.

If the helicopters are disruptive to my home now, I am sure that it will become even more of an intrusion when I relocate to a higher floor. Besides the disruptive clatter caused by the helicopters, I fear they could also cause a drop in the value of the property I am purchasing. Not to mention the danger they could possibly pose to the tenants of the buildings they fly over on a regular basis.

Therefore on behalf of myself, and all others affected by this nuisance I am submitting this letter in the hopes that something can be done to rectify the situation.

Sincerely,

HNC 191

S.

News Articles

Spark Protests

By MICHAEL J. YBARRA

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Nelson Ho, head of the Sierra Club in Hawaii, trekked for three hours through a rain forest on Hawaii's Big Island recently to reach a remote cinder cone that bubbles and spits lava.

But the flying tourists got there first. As many as four helicopters at once hovered noisily to share the view. "Here we are, spending all this time slogging through the mud to get to this natural wonder and it was so rudely thrashed," Mr. Ho says. His hiking companion bared more than his feelings to the tourists: He turned his back on them and dropped his pants.

Such sentiments are increasingly shared by residents, hikers and park rangers in Hawaii — and in national parks like the Grand Canyon — who have long hated the aircraft that swarm over their natural wonders. After years of complaining, industry foes have finally created enough of their own uproar that tour operators are bracing for restrictions.

The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund and a coalition of environmental and community groups, for example, petitioned the Federal Aviation Administration in January for a total ban on flights over the state's national parks. "You have an industry that is entirely out of control," says Barry Stokes, president of Citizens Against Noise, a Hawaii group seeking to bridle heli-tours.

Now, Washington is turning a sympathetic ear. In December, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt called air tourism "intrusive and offensive" as he announced a task force with the Transportation Department to craft rules restricting flights over national parks. Hawaii's Democratic Rep. Patsy Mink introduced a bill last year that would sharply curtail flights over national parks; similar bills by Democratic Rep. Pat Williams of Montana and Hawaii's Democratic Sen. Daniel K. Akaka are pending.

The industry owes much of the backlash to its own success. In Hawaii, where helicopter excursions are one of the few segments of the tourism industry to fare well in a four-year downturn, the industry expects to fly about 500,000 passengers this

Please Turn to Page B4, Column 5

Helicopter Tours Are Sparking A Growing Number of Protests

Continued From Page B1

year, up fivefold from 1984.

Last year, the Hawaiian and Grand Canyon air-tour operators, which industry officials say account for between half and two-thirds of the industry's passenger count, carried almost 1.3 million tourists and generated about \$175 million in revenue. Nationwide figures aren't available, but Mr. Babbitt's task force reports that almost a third of national-park managers have problems with overflights.

It's easy to see the allure for tourists. On a recent day above Maui, David Chevalier noses his helicopter down through a cloud and threads along one of the steep, inaccessible canyons that slice into the island's mountains. Waterfalls tumble down both sides of the gorge as Mr. Chevalier, a director of the Hawaiian Helicopters Operators Association, inches up to a spectacular cascade so a sunburned visitor can video the scene. "Awesome," the tourist beams.

"Expensive circus rides," says Dan Taylor, chief of resources management at Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii. Mr. Taylor says he never oversleeps when camping out in the park's back country because helicopters begin buzzing overhead early in the morning. "Almost everybody who backpacks is disturbed," he says. "Our mandate is to provide a tranquil experience; that is impossible to do."

Hawaiian residents have strung up banners telling airborne tourists to "Go Away." One local painted a helicopter on his roof with a slash through it; another was briefly questioned by federal authorities after he called the FAA to say he was frustrated enough to shoot down choppers.

The Grand Canyon has fewer residents to annoy, but plenty of annoyed visitors. Last year, 750,000 people flew over the chasm with some 40 different companies based in five states. A blizzard of flights reaches 20 an hour during tourist season.

Dennis Brownridge, a teacher who has visited the canyon for 40 years, says he camped in April with a group of students at a spot on the rim that, on a map, looked well off the flight path. Soon after sunrise, planes started droning overhead. "You can't get away from them," he says.

Air-tour operators insist their craft are democratic, allowing the young, old and disabled to visit natural wonders they couldn't otherwise see. And, they argue, aircraft are environmentally sound: They

don't trample plants, build fires or leave trash. "It's a very emotional issue," says Bob DeCamp, president of the Hawaii Helicopter Operators Association. "Our passengers are taxpayers; they've paid to have the parks preserved." But Mr. DeCamp says restrictions on overflights of national parks will only increase the number of helicopters buzzing over residents as pilots divert to other scenic sights.

Dan Anderson, president of the Grand Canyon Air Tourism Association, says there were only 56 complaints last year, mostly from "environmental extremists."

Meanwhile, Hawaii's helicopter association says it tries to steer pilots away from residential areas where possible and disciplines those who flout the rules. It holds monthly meetings to listen to citizen concerns and runs a complaints hotline. Since March, Maui pilots have voluntarily avoided the rim of Haleakala Crater.

Detractors aren't impressed. "I've called their hotline hundreds of times," says Robert Hanusa, who lives on Maui. "They don't do anything about it."

The anti-aircraft issue has been festering since the federal government passed limited measures after a helicopter collided with a small plane in 1986 over the Grand Canyon, killing 25. In 1987, Congress approved the National Parks Overflight Act, establishing no-fly zones over the canyon, banning choppers from flying too close to the Haleakala rim and shielding Yosemite Valley from air tour operators.

But critics say the measures are ineffectual. The 1987 law, which says overflights were creating "a significant adverse effect on the natural quiet and experience" of the Grand Canyon, ordered a study on the effect of noise on visitors to national parks. The study isn't finished, delayed, Interior Department officials say by difficulties in measuring "quietness."

The only rein on the industry since the flight-free zone has been a new \$2 fee charged by the National Park Service this year to tour operators each time they enter into public air space. But a ranger at a park in Hawaii estimates that two-thirds of the operators aren't reporting their flights.

The Interior Department task force says the flight-free zones spare most of the visitors to the Grand Canyon's rims and about 90% of back-country hikers from being bothered by flights. But the Babbitt task force says in a report that "most, if not all, of the gain has been, or may be, lost as a result of the exponential growth in numbers of flights over the canyon."

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